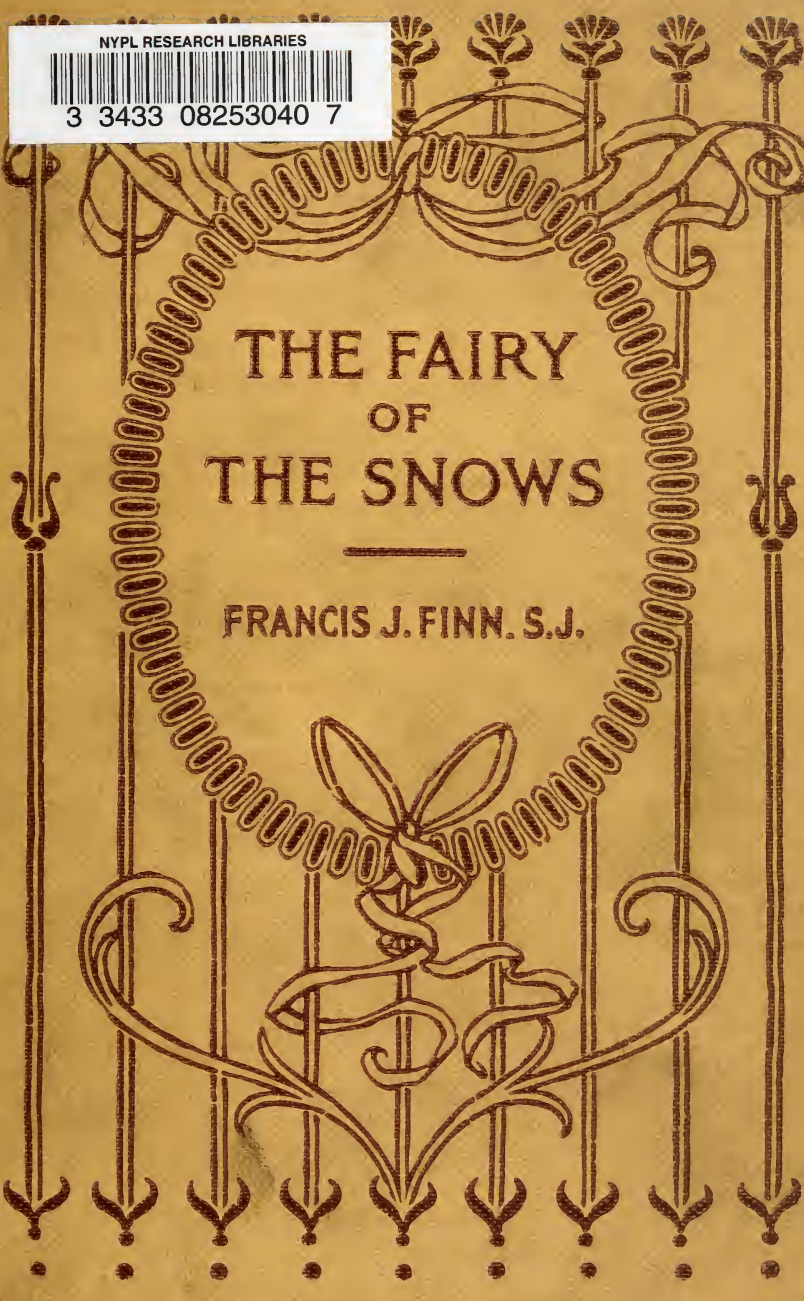


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THE FAIRY OF THE SNOWS

—
FRANCIS J. FINN. S.J.

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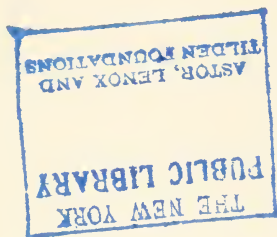
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Author of "Percy Wynn," "Tom Playfair,"
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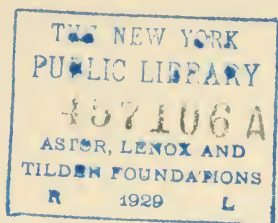


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THE FAIRY OF THE SNOWS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING, AMONG OTHERS, ALICE MORROW,
THE FAIRY OF THE SNOWS

ON A Monday morning in January I was sitting at my desk in the school-office, steeling myself to deal with those little girls of the school who had not been present at the Sunday Mass. It was a gloomy day and a cold. Outside a goodly number of the Cincinnati street-cleaning department with shovels and wagons were busy carting away the heavy snowfall of the previous Saturday.

Presently there was a timid knock.

"Come in."

Enters a little girl of seven in sore distress.

"Well, Sarah, what is the matter?"

"Father, please, I didn't go to Mass."

"I know that. Why?"

"Please, Father, my shoes were at the shoemaker's, and he didn't have them ready till this morning. He was too busy all day Saturday to sole them."

I knew that Sarah was one of seven children; that the father earned thirteen dollars a week; and that the poor mother had more than she could do to make ends meet.

"Very good, Sarah," I said. "You seldom miss——"

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"Father, please," she interrupted, "it's the first time since last summer."

In vacation months, be it known, Sarah had not gone to Mass at all. In common with her brothers and sisters she went barefoot during July and August—a saving to the family, in the matter of shoes, of about twelve dollars.

"Well, Sarah," I resumed, "your record is good. I'm sure mama couldn't help it. Do your best. Next!"

"Next" was a girl of nine—a gypsy-like mite, a thing of shreds and patches.

"What! Again!" I said.

"Father, we didn't get up."

"Who didn't get up?"

"None of us."

"But you seem to be up, young lady."

"I mean, Father, we didn't get up Sunday morning."

"Why didn't you?"

"Please, Father, we had a party at our house Saturday night."

"Who had a party?"

"My mama; and they didn't leave till ever so late, and we was all so tired we just didn't wake up in the morning—till after twelve o'clock."

"But what had you to do with the party? It was for grown folks, wasn't it?"

"Please, Father, I had to stay up to run errands."

"Oh!" Running errands had but one meaning in the matter under discussion. Little Jennie Jenkins had spent the night in bringing an empty pitcher to the corner saloon and returning with

it filled. The "party" meant much beer, a little "rag," and some villainous singing to the accompaniment of a still more villainous piano. I had seen and heard that piano. Such are the simple and sophisticated pleasures on Saturday nights of a certain class of our urban population. On Monday morning they are precisely where they were on the previous Saturday before the payment of the weekly wages. The Saturday "party" makes for Conservatism: those who persevere in it regularly never go forward; as to going backward, that is impossible.

"Jennie Jenkins, you're growing up a little Pagan! I don't believe you've been to Sunday Mass in three months."

"Please, Father, I was oncet."

"Now, Jennie, I want you to bring me a written note from your mother to-morrow morning stating why you missed Mass."

This was a terrible punishment—for the mother! Married women whose cult is beer have an intense repugnance to the use of pen and paper.

In answer to "Next," there came from the outer office into mine an apparition which caused me to straighten up and fairly gasp.

The little girl who now appeared came tripping in so lightly, trotting all the way to my side with such grace of motion, and looking up out of deep brown eyes so smilingly into mine that—coupled with the circumstance of her being attired in tiny slippers, white stockings, and a flimsy white dress—I felt as though a visitant from fairyland had somehow slipped into St. Xavier School.

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Her features were regular, her face a delicate oval, and her expression candor itself. And then in the least possible fraction of a moment, in the face of a dark winter's day and the dull thud of snow-shovels without, there flashed through my mind Francis Thompson's exquisite quatrain:

"The hills look over on the south,
And southward dreams the sea;
And with the sea-breeze, hand in hand,
Came innocence and she."

The little girl, slippered and all in white, brought sunshine with her, and the smile upon her face with the light of confidence in her eyes a hint of Spring. Flowers invisible were blooming all about me.

"Who are you, little girl?"

"Why, Father, don't you remember me? I'm Alice Morrow. You gave me a picture in October for being first in the fifth grade. I've got it yet. It's a picture of the Sacred Heart, and it's got all the promises on the back. I know them all by heart, and I'm teaching them to my next sister, Elsie. I've got it yet, and I keep it over our bed so we can see it when we wake up."

I regret to say that, in the complicated work of attending to the needs of eleven hundred boys and girls, I had completely lost sight of Alice Morrow, aged ten, and, as I knew from the records, the leader of the fifth grade.

"Oh, so it's you, Alice! I'm glad to meet you again; but you come around so seldom that you can hardly blame me for forgetting you."

"Oh, I don't blame you, Father. You've got such a lot to remember. I know I can't remem-

ber things sometimes myself. Sister Dorothy gave me this note to give you."

She had been holding an envelope in her hand. I took it, and while I tore open the envelope and read the letter Alice flitted and hopped about the room like a little bird in the branches of a tree. The letter read:

"DEAR FATHER: Kindly take a look at this little girl, Alice Morrow, the youngest, the brightest, and the sunshiniest child in our fifth grade. She attended Mass yesterday in the summer slippers and summer garments you now see her wearing. Winter—with the thermometer at two degrees above zero—appears to have no terrors for our tiny spring-maid.

"Respectfully,
"SISTER DOROTHY, S.N.D."

I took another look at Alice, who happened to be examining with evident pleasure the picture of a First Communicant—the most artistic thing, photograph though it was, in my office. The fine lines of Alice's face, the Madonna-like oval, the luxuriant brown hair, shot, in the sunlight (as I observed later), with gold were the first things that would strike one. But there was one detail in which her beauty left something to be desired. It is hard to rob tender years of the natural complexion; yet, looking closely, one could not but suspect that the child was poorly nourished. The roses of her cheeks would soon be the roses of yester-year. They were "fading fast away."

"Come here, Alice."

She was trotting toward me at the word, as

though she intended running me down; nor did she slacken her pace till she was quite upon me, when she came to a sudden halt in a manner quite beyond any creature of a large growth.

"Alice, did you have your breakfast?"

"Oh, yes, Father; we had potatoes."

"What else?"

"That's all, Father."

"Didn't you drink anything?"

"Yes, Father; we had water."

"Didn't you have any bread?"

"We had rolls on Saturday."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed. "And what are you going to have for dinner?"

"Potatoes."

"And for supper?"

"Maybe we'll go to bed early, and then, you see, we don't need any supper. Mama doesn't know whether the potatoes will last out that long."

Potatoes as a regular diet, outside of Ireland, where this popular vegetable has a power of nourishment unknown in the United States, had never before occurred to me. It was only later I learned that, when everything else in the way of provender fails, and there is no credit at the grocery, the simplest manner of recruiting the larder is to send the little ones out on a scouting expedition for the despised potato. The quest costs nothing, and, though I have not yet learned how it is done, it brings results. Nevertheless, although I did not realize then that little Alice had spent the greater part of Saturday in a potato hunt, I felt sure that there was dire poverty in the Morrow household.

"Do you like potatoes, Alice?"

"Oh, yes! Why, I don't get enough—at least, I think so; but mama says more people die from eating too much than from eating too little. And then, Father, when I get tired of eating potatoes I put more salt on them, and shut my eyes, and imagine I'm eating salt-herrings. Do you like salt-herrings?"

Not feeling quite equal to answering this question to the young lady's satisfaction, I went on:

"Are those your winter shoes?"

"Father, how can you ask that? Uncle Ed gave me these last summer. But they're real warm in the house, you know. And when I come to school I pick out the places where the snow is hard or there ain't any, and I hop and skip from one place to another. It is as good as a play."

"You hop and skip like a little bird, eh?"

"That's just it, Father; how did you guess it? Sometimes I make believe I'm a little bird, and sometimes I'm a frog; they hop, too, you know."

"Where do you live?"

"At 371 East Third. Here's the way you get there. When you come to the right number, you go in by a side passage and walk up the staircase to the second floor. But don't you go in there. There's a woman lives there who uses language that's just awful; and she's got a boy who steals bicycles, and two girls who pull my hair and jerk the ribbons out, and stick their tongues away out at me. Mama says they're common. No, you go back through the house when you get to the second floor, and you come

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to another staircase leading up from a porch on the other side, and you go up that, and then you get to our place on the third floor away back. If you come down to-day, you will find my mama and my papa in. Papa's a plasterer, you know; but he hasn't had any work for three weeks."

"How many children are there in the family?"

"There's me, and Elsie, who's eight, and Frank, who's six, and Margaret, who's three. Elsie's in the third grade, and she's learning fast. This is the best school I ever went to."

"Have you been to so many?"

"Five. Last year I went to the public school in Dayton, the year before to the Catholic school in Columbus, and the year before that to the public in Cleveland. I forget where I went to school first; but I think it was somewhere in Virginia. Our family has traveled a lot."

"Sit down, Alice, and take off those slippers."

"Michael," I called to my office-boy without, "come in here and see if you can't get this little girl a pair of shoes."

Michael, long accustomed to such orders, entered, opened the clothes-press, and while he attended to Alice, who kindly gave him unasked a number of autobiographical details, I called up by telephone one of my friends and co-workers in charity, Miss Margaret Dalton.

"That you, Margaret? This is Father Carney of St. Xavier School. Yes—Carney. Have you time to make a visit in a case of extreme necessity? There's a little fairy in my office by

the name of Alice Morrow of 371 E. Third St., third floor, away back. She hops and skips like a fairy out of a pantomime, and is dressed as though she were about to appear in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. I don't know whether fairies live on a diet of potatoes or not, but that's what this particular fairy is doing. From what she told me, there are not enough potatoes in the house to go around for supper. The father has been out of work for several weeks. It looks like a deserving case. The girl is as clean and as neat as a pin, and talks with a certain amount of refinement. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Father: and I thank you for calling me up. How many are there in the family? Three little girls, one boy, and the parents? Very good! I'll go at once, and let you know later."

And thus entered into my life, with results I purpose faithfully setting down, the Fairy of the Snows.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCING THE MORROW FAMILY

ON THE following morning Miss Margaret Dalton called at my office to make her report.

"I think it is a really deserving case," she said. "They live in two rooms in the most ramshackle house I have ever been in."

"Which is saying a good deal," I interposed. For several years Margaret and her sisters had been visiting, in season and out, the sick and the poor.

"But everything is neat and clean. The living-room is kitchen, dining-room and living-room in one. The pans are shining, the stove is polished, everything has its place; and Mrs. Morrow, a little bit of a body, is as clean and neat as her children. The little ones are well cared for: their clothes are not held together by pins: there's a button wherever a button should be; and each of them is quite familiar with the saving virtue of cold water and a bath."

"But what about the head of the house?" I put in.

"I was coming to him. He is a rather fine looking, pleasant-faced man of about thirty-five or so. He looks fairly strong and healthy; and is nearly six feet tall. When I came in he was seated with a child on each knee, and the others

grouped around them. He was telling them some sort of a story, I believe; whatever it was, they were listening breathlessly. The mother was sitting on the other side of the kitchen stove mending a little dress. I could see at a glance what you couldn't see, Father, in half an hour's inspection: That dress had been mended and re-mended almost beyond count. Of one thing I'm morally certain—Mrs. Morrow is all thrift and industry."

"And what about the man?"

"As far as I could judge he seems to be a most devoted father. One can see that he loves his children, and no less clearly that his children love him."

"That's precisely the account my office-boy, Michael, gives, too. When Alice left my office yesterday equipped with a new pair of shoes—for which she was more than duly grateful—Michael was good enough to tell me that on two different occasions, when the Morrow children were absent from school, he had gone to their house to look them up; and that on one of these visits he had found the father home nursing Elsie, down with the measles, with the tenderness of a woman. Michael didn't put it exactly that way; but such was the substance of his observation. He also gave it as his opinion that Mr. Morrow was a nice man. And yet I don't quite understand. How is it he is out of work?"

"I tried to get some information on that point. He gave me a long explanation. First he had been sick for a week; then the weather had been bad; and then he made some remarks

about the Union and the Union Card which I could make neither head nor tail of. Also, he represented that being a stranger in the city he found it hard to get work unless it were plentiful. In the winter, there's little plastering."

"Did he look like a drinking man, Margaret?"

"No, indeed. His eyes were clear and there was no puffiness of face and no discoloration. He looked like a total abstainer; although, he admitted that he occasionally took a glass of beer. Thereupon his wife, with a timid smile, remarked that for the last three weeks he had not lived up in any sense even to that admission."

"Well, Margaret, I must say that all this is very unusual. Tell me—was there anything in the house for supper?"

"The potato supply"—and there was a twinkle in Margaret's eye—"had come to an end with the noonday meal. There wasn't a thing in the way of food in the place. I must say this case strikes me as the most serious and the most deserving I have ever come across in all these years."

"And you might add the most extraordinary. Since being in charge of this school I have hobbled with poverty—with all sorts of poverty; from the poverty that comes of a beer income and champagne taste to the poverty that visits a large family of little ones where the husband and bread-winner is taken away untimely; but I've never in all my experience known of a case where there was nothing to eat in the house but

there had also been previously too much to drink."

"That's a fact, Father; excessive drink and abject poverty would appear to go hand-in-hand!"

"If by abject poverty you mean 'nothing to eat in the house'—yes; especially if it is a sort of da-capo performance. It does happen in time of calamity to deserving people, but, if they be not intemperate, they need only to be put on their feet. Well, what have you done?"

"I sent them a basket of provisions at once. It ought to last them three days—a soup-bone, flour, eggs, sugar, coffee, a string of sausages, and so on. Then, my sister, Teresa, is now scouring her friends of the Notre Dame Academy Alumnae for children's clothes. They'll all be provided for by night. As for Mrs. Morrow, we've plenty for her out of our own stock. Also, there's a matter of five dollars on rent due——"

"Allow me to take care of that," I broke in. "Just a few minutes ago, a man—sent by God, it may be—walked in and gave me this five-dollar gold-piece, saying, 'Father, use that for the poor, and pray for me.' He walked out almost before I could thank him. I never saw him before."

"Thank you, Father; I'll attend to the rent at once. One thing I forgot to tell you. Mr. Morrow says he has a job. He starts to work this morning. I'll send them another basket on Thursday, and by the time that's exhausted pay day will have come and the Morrows will be on their feet again."

"For all of which thanks be to God!"

A knock at the door cut short what further reflections I was minded to make, and in answer to my "Come in" the door opened; and there in the doorway curtsying elaborately and smiling expansively stood our little fairy of the snows, looking now, by reason of the new shoes, rather more like a mere mortal.

"Oh, Miss Margaret, is that you?—Good morning, Father; I didn't know you had company. I just came in to thank you for these shoes; they fit me so nicely. Mama says that lots of little girls will be jealous of me. Mama says for me to thank you from her heart."

"You and mama are quite welcome, my dear."

"And we had such a supper last night. Before it was over, I had to get up and loosen Elsie's waistband; and our brother would have choked, if we hadn't beaten him on the back. When we said our prayers, ma made us put in, 'God bless Father Carney and Miss Margaret.' I'm going to say that prayer every night as long as I live. Oh, Miss Margaret, did you take a look at my new shoes?"

Then all at once the left foot went up with a suddenness which made it appear as though Alice was intent upon kicking her benefactor. Up it went straight, sudden, till it was quite possible for Margaret without bending to see the sole from heel to toe—and so remained, in the face of all the known laws of equilibrium.

"Excellent: the shoes are strong and look well. For goodness sake, child, put your foot down, or you'll break your neck."

"No, I won't, Miss Margaret: I can do *real* stunts, if I want to," replied Alice, recovering the normal gravity. "But I just came in to say thank you. So I guess I'll go now. Good-bye, Miss Margaret; good-bye, Father."

She made for the door—fairy-like in her glide—and, then, once more she astonished me.

Turning in the threshold, she faced us and with that suddenness of movement, to which I had not yet become accustomed in her, made a profound curtsy—more profound than that which had prefaced her entrance. She "sank and rose like the crest of a wave."

"Alice," I called, as she was turning to go, "where on earth did you learn that curtsy?"

"There was a young lady I knew in Dayton, Father, and she used to go to a convent boarding-school, and she showed me once how they used to do it when the Bishop came."

"It was a Sacred Heart girl," commented Margaret as Alice disappeared.

And then I recalled Miss Repplier's, "Oh, the hours of bitter practice it took to limber my stiff little knees for those curtsies!" Ease in motion does not come handily to all of us. But Alice Morrow could never—supposing her to have the power of expression—have penned Miss Repplier's comment.

"Father, do you know that Alice Morrow has everything that goes in the making of a *danseuse*?"

"Indeed," I answered; and presently forgot her observation. But it was to be recalled in the light of later events.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCING MICHAEL, THE OFFICE-BOY, AND SHOWING ALICE MORROW IN HER FIRST KNOWN DANCE

“**I** SAY, Father,” said my faithful office-boy, Michael, toward the end of February, “Alice Morrow is very fond of reading.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, Father: she likes fairy stories especially.”

“Quite natural,” I made answer. “Every little child ought to like fairy tales.”

“Yes, Father; but you see she hasn’t much of a chance at home. They have no books.”

“Well, Michael, what are you driving at?”

“The fact is Alice has hinted to me several times that she’d like you to loan her some books to read.”

“Oh! That’s it, is it?”

“And she paid you an awful compliment.”

“She did? Let’s have it.”

“She said that any book you recommended or picked out for her would be just three times as interesting because *you* picked it out.”

“What an imagination the child must have.”

“She considers you a tin god, Father.”

“She didn’t use that expression, young man.”

“No; but that’s what it came to. She wants to know whether there’s any chance of your being the next Pope.”

“Did you undeceive her?”

"Sure, I did. I told her you didn't want the job."

"A very nice way of putting it," I commented.

Michael, be it remarked, was just turned fifteen, and, in his youthful simplicity, thought that the papal dignity might be mine for the asking. He is older now, and knows better.

"I told her you was a ——"

"What's that?" I interrupted.

"I beg pardon; I told her you were——"

"I thank you, Michael."

"A Jesuit priest, and that you wouldn't accept any what-you-may-call-it."

"Quite clear, Michael."

"Well, I did make it clear. I said you couldn't be a Bishop or a Cardinal or anything of the kind; and she said you ought to stop being a Jesuit then."

"Michael, are you and Miss Alice trying to tempt me against my vocation?"

"Not at all, Father. I wouldn't want you to be a Bishop on any account. Who'd run this school, then?"

Children are hero-worshippers. If they don't find heroes in their daily round, they create them out of the common clay.

"Well, to return to Alice. I'm glad you told me that she wanted books to read. The child seems to have a fine imagination: she walks in fairyland. What a pity so many little boys and girls with their imaginations hungering for the wonderful are starved because to them fairyland is an unknown country. See that Alice comes to my office at the morning recess."

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At recess, accordingly, Alice duly tripped in. She was all smiles and gladness. About her tiny person radiated youth and hope and spring.

"Good morning, Father: I'm awfully glad you sent for me. I haven't had a chance to talk to you in three weeks: I've counted the days. You know, we don't come to your office unless you send for us. Sister Dorothy says you're a very busy man, and you'd have no time for yourself at all if everybody came running in on you every time they felt like it."

"I suppose, Alice, you'd like me to send for you occasionally."

"Oh, yes, Father: I should like it dearly."

"How often about?"

"Twice a day," was the prompt answer.

"Do you like to read books, Alice?"

"Oh!" cried Alice, rising on her toes, rolling her eyes upwards, and remaining thus ecstatically while she spoke, "I should say I do. I just love any story-book, and I dearly love fairy tales."

Saying which, Alice's feet settled once more upon the floor. In avowing that she "dearly loved fairy tales" she had thrown out her hands in such wise that she gave one the impression that she was about to fly away.

Michael giggled.

He was seated at his desk with his face in profile. I turned and looked hard at Michael, who at once changed his smiles into blushes.

"Have you finished addressing those envelopes, Michael?"

"No, Father: I'll be through soon."

"You know I'm waiting for them," I said

dryly, thus extinguishing Michael. "Now, Alice, I'm going to loan you a book of fairy tales—Grimm's Fairy Tales: and you have my permission to come to the office when you are ready to bring the book back. Then you'll get another book with the same permission and so on. Michael!"

"Yes, Father."

"I hate to interrupt you, Michael; but would you kindly slip into the inner office and get Grimm's Tales out of my book-case. It'll only take you a minute or so, you know."

This sounds like sarcasm: but Michael called it "rubbing it in," and, on the whole, enjoyed it.

"Don't you like Michael, Father?" inquired Alice when that young gentleman had gone into the further room.

"I certainly do."

"Why do you talk to him that way, then? If you talked to me like that I'd feel just terrible."

"I hope, then, I'll never talk to you in that way, Alice. As for Michael, we have our own little ways of exchanging thought."

"Oh, I see! Say, ain't boys funny?"

Michael saved me the trouble of pursuing this rather vast subject by returning with the desired book.

"Oh, thank you, Father, thank you ever so much!" cried Alice. "I don't care now whether we have supper or not to-night."

"What's that? Isn't papa working?"

"He's just lost his job."

I looked closely at Alice's face. The roses of her cheeks were again in full bloom. Her complexion, always fine, was evidently clearer

than on the occasion of her apparition as the "Fairy of the Snows." During the past six weeks all had gone well with the Morrows. The man had had steady employment, the children, thanks to Miss Margaret and her sisters, had been supplied with warm clothes and good shoes. In a word, as Michael had observed, "we had put them on their feet and they had stayed put."

There is little of romance in dealing with the very poor—outside the story-books, of course—little romance, and still less gratitude. If one were working for earthly appreciation it would, in nineteen cases out of twenty, be time wasted. But one is working for Christ; and, besides, the saving grace of it all, humanly speaking, is that there is always hope for the children. The fathers and mothers are too often idle, and given either to drink or to gambling. They cumber the ground. However, as regards the Morrow family, we were dealing, it would seem, with the twentieth case. They were grateful, they were on their feet, and they gave promise of being able to keep, without outside help, the wolf from the door.

Alice favored me, as she departed, with her famous curtsy; on seeing which Michael incontinently rushed into the inner office, where I heard him choking hard in a vain endeavor not to be heard by me. The boy had a sense of humor, thank God. He was very poor, as the world regards such matters; but no one is really poor who has an eye for the incongruous.

Chancing to go out into the vestibule on my way to the music-room, across from the office, I glanced down the cloister-like hall-way be-

tween the class-rooms. Miss Alice holding the book on high as though it were a tambourine, was executing a "pas seul"—body whirling, hands and feet flying. I recalled Miss Margaret's remark about the "danseuse." Little as I knew of the poetry of motion, it was clear to my somewhat astonished eyes that the Fairy of the Snows was one of the few with the natural gift of translating feeling—joy, at least—into motion. While I was still staring, almost spell-bound, the fairy suddenly disappeared. The book came down into a human hand, the flying arm and the flying feet shot into positions most demure, and Alice Morrow, no longer the fairy, was walking along with a sedateness which was plainly more than natural: the Head-Sister had just come out of a class-room. Alice had illustrated to me the saying of the prestidigitator, "We move so quickly that we deceive the eye." The Sister saw nothing; and I certainly did not tell her.

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CHAPTER IV

NARRATING ALICE'S VISIT TO A RESTAURANT

Alice in the ensuing six or seven weeks must have missed many a supper: it was not uncommon for her to get a book one day and return it the next. She not only read each volume, but she retained what she read. Her memory was most unusual. On one occasion, on coming down to the school-office, I heard, as I reached the vestibule, a silvery voice. It was the voice of Alice in the outer office. I paused, and for nearly five minutes listened. It was not my intention, of course, to play the eavesdropper. But Alice was not engaged in conversation: she was telling the story of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp: this fact, I caught at once, and then, like the wedding guest of the Ancient Mariner, "I could not choose but hear." The flow of the language was so easy, the words were so well chosen, the sentences so satisfying that I inferred she must be reading. But, on second thought, I rejected the inference: no child of her age could read with intonations so easy and so natural.

The girl, I surmised, must have committed the entire story to memory. After a time I peeped in through the open door. Michael, seated at his desk, was gazing spellbound at Alice Morrow, his spellbinder. His jaw had dropped, and his eyes were wide with the won-

der of wonderland. Here was Romance in its primitive innocence. I was hesitating as to entering, when Alice, in a mad gesture, intended to signify the rubbing of the lamp, swung partly round and caught my eye.

"Oh, good morning, Father: I was just telling Michael about Aladdin. Did you hear me?"

"I did. Tell me, Alice, did you learn the story by heart?"

"I read it twice, Father, and I know it. You see I read all the best stories twice, and then I tell them to our family. Oh, we have an awfully good time: we can put out the lamp: that's the best way for a story—in the dark. Then you can *see* everything just as it is happening. Did you ever listen to a story in the dark, Father? Michael never did."

"I'll try it, Alice, on your recommendation."

"It saves light, too," pursued Alice, "and, if you haven't had any supper, you don't know the difference."

"Isn't papa working now?"

"He's going to start next week."

"Come inside, Alice."

She followed me: and I closed the door.

"Alice, what did you have for breakfast?"

"Beans, Father."

"Anything else?"

"No, Father; beans are very healthy, mama says."

"How long has your father been out of work?"

"Just two weeks: he had a sick-spell last Sunday a week ago, and he lost his job. My pa

says he was just born for hard luck. I wish you knew him: he's just the nicest pa you ever read about. He tells us what he's going to do for us when his ship comes in. The name of the ship is the 'Hardly-Ever,' he says. When the 'Hardly-Ever' comes in, he's going to buy me a library full of all the fairy tales ever written, and he's going to get Elsie an ottermobile, and my little brother, Francis, a 'Dublin Express' and roller skates and a sled, and my littlest sister, Margaret, a collection of the finest dolls in the city, and mama a house in the suburbs with a cook to do the cooking, and a maid to do the sewing, and a little nigger girl with black face and chiney eyes to nurse the baby, and a pocket-book—a big one—full of ten-dollar gold-pieces. Isn't that fine!"

"It certainly is. When does your father expect the ship to come in?"

"He won't tell. He says it's a secret. The Captain of the ship is Captain Romance and the first mate is Mr. Maybe."

"I'm afraid, Alice, a good many things will happen before the good ship 'Hardly-Ever,' Captain Romance, comes in."

"I guess so: but it's nice to think of. We talk about it every night."

"Are you hungry, Alice?"

"Just a little: you see I have no headache to-day. When I have a headache I'm not hungry at all."

"And how about Elsie?"

"Oh, Elsie! she's always hungry. You ought to see her eat—I mean when she gets a chance."

"Go and get Elsie and come back here."

Presently, with Elsie clinging to one hand and Alice to the other, I was walking down Sycamore to Fifth, making a vain effort at dignity. With one little girl hopping like a swallow and chattering like a wren, and the other, in her eagerness to take in all sights and sounds, walking now sideways, now backwards and now not at all, and both clinging to my hands, locomotion, while possible, was anything but dignified.

There is, on Fifth St. between Sycamore and Main, an eating-house, called, not without propriety, the Ideal Cafetiere. Into this we entered, and seated ourselves at a table.

"Two small beefsteaks, rolls and coffee for two," I said to the neat-handed Phyllis of the establishment.

"Aren't you going to eat anything, Father?" inquired Alice.

I explained that a breakfast, just taken, would make such an attempt on my part ill-advised; and presently was enjoying the meal vicariously.

Elsie, serious and solemn-eyed, went to work with a will; while Alice seemed to play with her food; *seemed*, I say, for in the long run, her execution quite equalled Elsie's. Within a quarter of an hour there was a pair of clean plates such as Jack Spratt and his wife might well be proud of.

"I'd like to come here again," said little Elsie. "That's the sort of a meal I like."

"Would that be all, sir?" asked the Phyllis.

"Thank you, yes."

"I hope you enjoyed your meal, children," continued Phyllis, inspired to this kindly wish

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by the shining eyes and more than placid content of the two innocents.

"We did, very much, thank you, Miss," answered Alice; "and I hope, Miss, that you are feeling quite well this morning?"

"You bet," answered Phyllis, not saying, as I could see by her wistful glance at me, exactly what she wanted to. The poor girl, like so many of her class, said not what she wished to say, but what she could. Unpityingly, we call such lack of expression vulgar.

"You've a very sweet dimple on your chin," continued Alice serenely, "and I dearly love dimples, especially dimples on the chin. I hope, Miss, your family are all well."

"I should say," answered Phyllis, now anxious to get away.

"It's very kind of you to take such nice care of us—isn't it, Elsie?"

"It is," returned Elsie decidedly.

Phyllis was dumb. Red signals of distress were spreading over her features.

Considering it time to bring this delightful interchange of civilities to an end, I arose. Elsie made a dash for my hand.

"Elsie," said Alice, shaking her finger at her, "you forget. How often has mama told you."

Elsie, looking a trifle disconcerted, turned and stood behind her chair, fastened her eyes meekly on Alice and waited for further orders.

Then Alice, as though she and Elsie were all alone, made a big sign of the cross, her little sister following her example.

"We return Thee thanks, O Lord, for the

benefits received of Thy bounty, through Christ, our Lord."

As Alice pronounced these words in tones which reached the cook at one end of the place and the cashier at the other, both heads were bowed, four little eyes closed and two pairs of hands were clasped in unstudied ritual.

"Amen," cried Elsie, with vibrant earnestness and solemnity. Then each got a hand, and the procession, a little more difficult in the way of actual progress than before, made towards the cashier's desk.

The cashier, as it happened on this particular day, was no less a person than the owner of the restaurant, a slight, bright-eyed, trim, affable woman—a widow—who, taking the business apparently at its last gasp, had, by her attention to detail, her urbanity, and her executive ability raised it to life within a week, and, within three months, to a paying concern. She had, from her august position behind the cash register, taken in with kindly interest the children's deft performance with knife and fork; she had listened with delight to the conversation between Alice and Phyllis; and, when grace was said by the children, the tears came into her eyes. I understood: just a few weeks before, the little lad of hers who night after night had lisped at her knees, "Now I lay me down to sleep," had said that sweet prayer for the last time—said it with just such faith and innocence as the little girls had pronounced their grace—and then had laid himself down to a sleep, which, this side the grave, knows no waking.

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As she took the money with a smiling nod of thanks, she was eyeing the children.

"How do you do, ma'am?" said Alice, making her famous curtsy. Elsie attempted the same acrobatic feat with partial success.

"Father, where did you get those two little angels? Children, you must come again—come any time."

"We'd be very glad to," answered Alice; "wouldn't we, Elsie?"

"Oh, yes!" asserted Elsie earnestly.

"Poor?" queried the proprietor in my ears.

"Very," I whispered.

Then she slipped something into my hand. "For them," she whispered. It was a ten-dollar gold-piece.

"Good-bye, you little dears," she continued, coming from behind the counter, and kissing each.

We proceeded in silence along Fifth St.—a silence of several seconds, broken by Alice.

"That lady is a friend," she said.

And so she proved to be.

On reaching the office I telephoned Miss Margaret, asking her to take up the Morrow case again. Then Mrs. Sanders, the good woman who in her charity took charge of the lunch-room for the children, devoting three hours a day to the task, chancing to enter my office, I told her what I knew of the Morrow case.

"For the present," I said, "I'm going to send those children up to you at lunch-time each day; give them everything they want, and charge it to me."

"All right, Father," said Mrs. Sanders, with an enigmatical grin.

The enigma of that grin was solved subsequently. No bill ever came to me. Mrs. Sanders paid it out of her own pocket.

CHAPTER V

MISS TERESA DALTON TAKES ALICE TO THE OPERA "HANSEL AND GRETEL"

MISS MARGARET was prompt in visiting the Morrow family, and to her astonishment and dismay matters, she discovered, were very much in the same distressful condition as on her first visit. She reported to me at once.

"It is an extraordinary case," I observed.

"It certainly puzzles me. The man looks fairly strong; his eye and complexion are clear; and still he's again in the ranks of the unemployed. But even supposing there's a good reason for his being out of work, how comes it that he hasn't one cent to tide over such times? Hereafter, I'm going to visit them regularly."

"I think," said I, "it would be advisable."

"The children are lovely, well-cared for, and Alice is a sort of an infant phenomenon. I found her telling the others the story of Hansel and Gretel. She said it was their favorite. Then she told me that she intends to be an author and write books."

"Who knows? She might be. Isn't it an awful thing to meet these little children every day, not knowing what beautiful thoughts, what heavenly music, what lofty aspirations may be already germinating in their little heads?"

"She certainly has beautiful thoughts, Father. Her first book is going to be dedicated to you,

and if she gets a thousand dollars for it she is going to give you half. With the rest of the money she intends bringing the entire family to see a circus, and then take them for a trip round the world."

"Talking of a circus," I cried, "that reminds me of something even better for Alice. I notice that the opera 'Hansel and Gretel' is to be given Friday evening at Music Hall. Alice would certainly enjoy it. Yes, I don't know of any child in the city who would enjoy it more. It is her favorite fairy tale; and I fancy that Humperdinck's music would appeal to her. It's a pity she can't go to see it."

"I think we can arrange that, Father. My sister, Teresa, intends to take in one night of the opera, and she can easily arrange for that night and take Alice with her."

On Saturday afternoon the following letter reached me:

"DEAR FATHER: Your little friend Alice was with me last night at the opera 'Hansel and Gretel'; and I must write to tell you about it. She saw the opera; but I did not. She missed nothing from the rise of the curtain to its fall. As for myself, I spent most of my time in watching her. She sat motionless—her body, at least, was motionless—gazing at everything going on upon the stage. But her face! You should have seen the changes—merriment, laughter, pity, awe, enthusiasm. I couldn't begin to describe the emotions that were chasing one another upon her face. During the dance between Hansel and Gretel, she seemed to be

dancing, too; and still nothing moved but her eyes and her face. That's it: her face and eyes were dancing, and when the angels came upon the stage in stately procession the little girl looked as I imagine little girls ought to look when they are safe in heaven. She was in an ecstasy, apparently. Men and women around her turned their eyes from the stage to watch her. Even a few sitting in front of us turned around; but she took no notice of their glances. She was wrapt up to some seventh heaven of childhood, a place few children reach. When the angels disappeared she came to herself with a little sigh, a sort of a Peri at the gate of heaven, getting one little glimpse of the splendors within, only to have the gates closed in her face. I sometimes think that all children are artists in embryo, and they do not grow up with their æsthetic sense developed, because we grown folks don't give them a chance to see the beauty all around us.

"Anyhow, I'm so glad you suggested Alice's seeing the opera, and although I did not pay much attention to the performance the two hours and a half I spent at Music Hall were the pleasantest, in the way of pleasure, I have ever spent. Your little 'fairy' is quite at home in 'Fairyland.' Next summer, if Ben Greet's Woodland Players come to the Zoo, I intend, please God, taking Alice to see *Midsummer Night's Dream*. I escorted Alice home, and all the way her conversation was a succession of 'ohs' and 'ahs' and exclamation points.

"There is one little circumstance, on our arriving at her 'home'—God help us!—which

caused me a little wonder. We had not quite started up the staircase leading to the third story, when her mother came hurrying down to meet us. She seemed ill at ease, thanked me for my kindness to Alice, and bade me good night, saying, 'I won't ask you up: the children are all sleeping, and they are so easily awakened.' She spoke in a low voice and was evidently very nervous. She seemed to be *afraid* of my coming up-stairs.

"This is a long letter; but I thought you would be interested in Alice's first play. Come and see us real soon. Joined by all the family in best wishes, and begging your prayers for a special intention, I am,

"Yours sincerely,
"TERESA."

But this letter was by no means the last echo of the fairy opera.

Toward noon I was called to the telephone, and there ensued the following conversation. I give all the preliminaries, because it illustrates what a busy priest must endure with sodalities numbering hundreds of members, a boys' and girls' school of eleven hundred, and an acquaintance among young women of I don't know how many.

"St. Xavier School," I declared.

"Halloa?"

"Yes."

"Is this St. Xavier School?"

"That's what I said, and this is Father Carney talking."

"Is that you, Father Carney?"

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"Yes, that's what I said."

"What?"

"Yes," I began to bellow, "this is Father Carney."

"Oh, good morning, Father, don't you know me?"

"*Who* is it?"

"This is Margaret."

"Margaret! Margaret *who*?"

"Why, Margaret Sullivan."

"*Which* Margaret Sullivan?"

"Oh, don't you remember me?"

Then I became heroic.

"Probably I do. I know of three Margaret Sullivans in the Young Ladies' Sodality, two Margaret Sullivans in the Children of Mary, two Margaret Sullivans now at St. Xavier School, four who have attended it in the last six years, and about eight Margaret Sullivans who belong neither to school nor sodality."

"Well, I'm the one of the Young Ladies' Sodality who works at Wurlitzer's."

"Ah! Now we can go on. (No wonder, I reflected, that some men will use profane language.) "Glad to hear from you, Margaret, what is it?"

"There was a little girl in here about an hour ago, about ten years old, with a smaller sister. She said her name was Alice Morrow. Do you know her?"

"I certainly do. Did she want to buy a piano?"

Irony is a dangerous thing on the 'phone. Miss Sullivan, at considerable length, pointed

out to me the improbability, all things considered, of Alice Morrow's investing in a piano.

"Well, what did she want?" I broke in.

"She asked me if I knew you, Father, then if I liked you, and when I told her yes, she asked me to shake hands. 'I hear,' she said, 'that you've got a thing for the talking-machine with Hansel and Gretel music on it,' she said. Then I said, 'Yes: we've got a very nice selection from Hansel and Gretel.' 'Would you,' she said, 'please play it for me?' I took the two kiddies into a small music-room, Father, and put the Hansel and Gretel record on for them. At the first strain Alice jumped and whispered to her sister. 'That's just it.' Then she listened standing perfectly still, holding fast to her sister's hand. There was some one I thought I knew passing our music-room, and I turned to see whether I was right. Are you listening, Father?"

"Most intently."

"Well, as soon as I turned my back, your young friend began to move to the music. I could see her every motion reflected in the glass. You know, Father, our music-rooms have glass walls. I kept my face turned from her, and the little girl, thinking that her sister was the only witness, began to whirl and turn to the music in a way that was simply amazing. Is she a professional?"

"Not to my knowledge. No; certainly not."

"Well, I never saw the like. She danced to that music as though she had been trained to it. You know, or rather I should have said, it is the dance song for Hansel and Gretel in the play.

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The way Alice Morrow did it was simply astonishing. How could she have learned it?"

"So far as I know, Miss Sullivan, the girl never took a dancing lesson in her life."

"Well, can you beat it? When the music finished, she asked me to play it again. She did not dance the second time. Then she asked me whether she could pay me another visit next Saturday. I told her she would be welcome. You say she never had a dancing lesson?"

"I do."

"Then she must be a fairy."

"You have guessed it, Miss Sullivan: Alice Morrow is the Fairy of the Snows."

"The WHAT!?" Miss Sullivan's voice expressed all manner of question marks and exclamation points.

"Alice Morrow," I repeated firmly, "is the Fairy of the Snows."

"Oh!" cried Miss Sullivan, and hung up the receiver.

CHAPTER VI

ALICE AND ELSIE MORROW SURPRISE FATHER
CARNEY, AND FATHER CARNEY SURPRISES
MISS DALTON.

ABOUT the end of March Alice and Elsie presented themselves in the school office with a certain amount of formality.

"Is Father Carney in, Michael?" I could hear Alice inquiring.

"He is."

"Well, I'd like to see him on particular business."

"Perhaps you are thinking of buying the school," suggested Michael pleasantly.

"Not at all," Alice made answer. "It's private."

Duly announced, the two entered my office.

"Good afternoon, children."

Alice, with a small package under her arm, was evidently, despite her customary smile, in a state of tense excitement. Elsie was, as usual, solemn-eyed, and burdened, too, with something she was bursting to tell me.

"I see, children, there's something on your minds."

For the first time in my dealings with Alice, she seemed to be at a loss for speech. She looked at Elsie. Elsie looked at her. She leaned over and whispered in her little sister's ear, who in reply shook her head stoutly.

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"It isn't bad news, I hope," said I in an attempt to break the ice.

"Father," said Alice, "it's—it's a surprise."

"Oh, you want to surprise me, do you? Thanks, very much. I just love to be surprised. Go on, and surprise me."

"Haven't you a Victrola across in the music-room?"

"We have."

"Then, Father, would you please come over, and put on this record?"—Alice held up her package—"and then sit down, and Elsie and I will do the rest."

We repaired at once to the music-room. I noticed as we stepped across that the children were beautifully and daintily dressed. Of course, I had a fairly good idea of what was to come. Miss Margaret Sullivan—the Miss Margaret Sullivan who worked at Wurlitzer's—had given me the key to what would otherwise have been a mysterious proceeding. I was prepared, then, to guess that the record in question was the Hansel and Gretel duet, and having put it on the machine I seated myself according to directions. The two girls, in the meantime, had taken a station in the middle of the room, poised for movement.

"I'm Hansel," announced Alice.

"And I'm Gretel," cried Elsie.

With the first strain, off they went in movements which, at first quiet and graceful, gradually became more and more lively. I had seen this dance before, done by professionals. But I had not seen in those artists of the stage the abandon, the grace, the perfect expression of

the child spirit which Alice, and, to a certain degree, Elsie, put into this famous duet. It was a remarkable performance.

"Capital, my children!" I exclaimed at the end. "Who in the world taught you?"

"Alice taught me," answered Elsie, "and she had a hard time, and scolded me. Once she beat me, too."

"Oh, Elsie, how can you say such a thing? I never did!"

"Well, you gave me a slap! You know you did," expostulated Elsie.

"That's different. You'd get a saint mad; you're so stiff."

"But who taught you, Alice?"

"I saw the play," answered Alice, "and I watched Hansel and Gretel when they danced; and then I went down to a friend of yours at Wurlitzer's—she's an awful nice lady—and got her to play it for me before I forgot the steps I saw."

There was to be an entertainment in the school-hall on the following Wednesday: on the spot, to their extreme and volubly expressed delight, I engaged the "Morrow Sisters" for their special number.

"How's mama?" I asked, as we returned to my office.

"Oh, she's very well, thank you, Father," Alice made reply. "She's been working the last ten days at these dresses. How do you like them?"

"They are just right. Your mother is an artist with the needle."

"She stayed up all hours to do it: and she said she was only too glad to do it for you."

"How nice of your mother. Is your father working?"

"He lost his job last Saturday. He's been sick, too; but he's well again now."

Singular! I reflected. Mr. Morrow is either just losing his job, or just getting a new one. He is either sick or getting well. Some day I hope to hear that he is both well and working. These reflections I did not voice; but, having dismissed the children with candy and renewed congratulations, I telephoned the long-suffering Miss Margaret Dalton to look into the affairs of the Morrow household once more.

Our entertainment on Wednesday night was an uncommon success. The Morrow Sisters danced, re-danced, and danced again. The hall on this, their first appearance, was filled with men and women, who, as they gazed on the two sprites, threw off their age and became young again.

Miss Margaret and two of her sisters were present, and, the entertainment concluded, took care of the little ones to such effect that within the ensuing hour Alice had five dishes of ice cream to her credit and Elsie seven.

For the next two entertainments the Morrow Sisters continued to be the bright particular stars; and then something happened which made a considerable change in our hitherto pleasant relations.

It was the last Monday in the month of March. Seated at my desk, I was going over the financial accounts of the school—a painful

duty—when a very little girl with very big eyes entered.

“Father,” she began, coming to the point at once, “Sister Dorothy gave me this note to give to you; she says she don’t know what to do about it.”

The note in question had been placed in an envelope and sealed by the teacher. It ran thus:

“DEAR SISTER: I am keeping Alice home from school this morning, as we have not a thing in the house to eat. All day Sunday we were nearly starved. Alice is out trying to get potatoes. My husband is out of work, and to-day is very sick. Could you not get me some food from the Convent? I have heard that the Sisters are very charitable, and I do not like to call upon Father Carney so often. It is very hard to beg, but I do it for the sake of my little children.

“Respectfully,
“MRS. MORROW.”

“Little girl,” I said, carefully folding the note and putting it in a special drawer of my desk, “you tell Sister Dorothy that she need not trouble about this affair at all: I’ll take care of it myself.”

Then I went to the telephone.

“Miss Margaret?”

“Yes.”

“This is Father Carney speaking. Have you visited the Morrow family lately?”

“Yes, Father, I was there Thursday last, and things did not look so good. Mr. Morrow lost his job on the Monday preceding, or rather,

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he could not hold it, because he took sick. He was in bed in the inner room last Thursday, and his wife said he was sleeping and thought he should not be disturbed."

"Do you know, Margaret, that the children have not had a decent meal since last Saturday?"

"What!" screamed Margaret.

I repeated my statement, adding: "And to-day there's not a thing in the house."

"Why, Father, you've been misinformed: I sent them a basket of provisions Saturday afternoon!"

It was now my turn to bellow "What!"

"Who said they had nothing to eat?" continued Margaret.

"I have in my desk just now the written statement of Mrs. Morrow. To-day little Alice is not at school because she has to go potato-hunting to replenish the empty larder."

"Father, listen! There's something wrong, and I'll go right down to their house and see what is the matter."

"Wait a while, Margaret. Let's try to get our facts in good shape first. To begin with, are you sure the basket was delivered?"

"I take it for granted. I ordered it at Sander's grocery."

"Well, suppose I call up Sander and find out."

Accordingly I called up the grocer by telephone. To my question, Mr. Sander thus replied:

"They certainly got their basket of provisions on Saturday afternoon before five o'clock. I packed the basket myself. There was sugar,

coffee, ham, bread, a soup-bone—and—and—well, enough provisions to last that family for four days. Our boy John here delivered the basket himself into the hands of Mrs. Morrow."

Telling the faithful Michael, who, blessed with excellent hearing, had taken in the situation thoroughly, to get Miss Margaret to investigate, I summoned Elsie Morrow.

Elsie came in looking troubled.

"Elsie, is it true that there is nothing to eat at home?"

"Mama didn't want you to see that note."

"So I suppose: but that doesn't answer my question. Is there anything to eat at home?"

"No, Father, not unless Alice has got some potatoes."

"And how about Sunday—yesterday?"

"We had beans."

"Go, get your hat, run home, and bring Alice to my office as fast as you can."

Within an hour Alice entered. She did not look like a fairy: her step was slow, her smile was gone.

"Alice," I began, "is it true that there's nothing to eat in the house?"

"Yes, Father," she made answer, hanging her head.

"And, is it true that you didn't have a full meal all day Sunday?"

"We had some beans and potatoes."

"What about Saturday evening. Did you have a meal then."

"Yes, we had something."

"Something!" I exclaimed with an energy

which caused Alice to jump and to blanch as though I had struck her. "Good heavens, child, what about the basket of provisions Miss Margaret sent your mother Saturday afternoon?"

Alice had gone white. Her head was down; she was squeezing her hands, but she gave no answer.

"Do you hear me?" I cried, losing, I am sorry to say, my patience.

"We ate it all up Saturday night."

"Alice, you have lied to me, and I am simply disgusted with you. I never thought that Alice Morrow would tell a lie like that."

Then Alice raised up her voice and wept. There was no mistaking the sincerity of her grief. Excited though I was, and carried away by anger, the pain in her eyes, the poignant pain, remained to haunt my memory for weeks to come.

I seated the child, and was waiting for her to compose herself, when there appeared on the scene Miss Margaret Dalton and Mrs. Morrow. The mother was a distressful sight. Her face showed the haggardness of weariness and watching; one of her eyes was badly discolored.

"Father," said Margaret, while Alice, unbidden, beat a retreat, "we've got the truth at last. Mr. Morrow is a sober man most of the time; but whenever he is paid his wages he gets drunk at once; he drinks till there's no money left, and then he takes to his bed. He's *sick* then."

"I do not like to tell on my husband," said the patient, long-suffering, little woman of the

black eye. "And I never would have told, if I could help it. But I didn't think the Sister would show you that note. After Miss Margaret sent me that basket, I couldn't ask her for food so soon."

"But what became of that basket?" I asked.

"I don't know. He took it away Saturday night, and he came back without it."

"How did you come to injure your eye, Mrs. Morrow?"

"Oh, I just ran against something."

"Against your husband's fist," I suggested.

"No," she said weakly. "He didn't do it."

Now the mother was lying.

"Oh, stuff!" I exclaimed impatiently. "You've been deceiving me right along. I'm through with you all. The best thing for you to do is to go to the Humane Society."

"Perhaps it is," said Miss Margaret doubtfully. "You should see the living-room. Everything is in disorder, the table has been smashed, and the stove-pipe is down and the stove upset."

"By all means, let her go to the Humane Society."

"My husband," said the poor woman, with some spirit, "is the kindest, the cleverest, the best husband any one could desire; and he's the most loving, the most attentive father that any children could have"—she paused a moment and then added—"when he's sober."

"Yes," I said harshly, "and in order to keep him sober, put him in the hands of the Humane Society."

How inhumanly I could talk of the humane.

“Miss Margaret,” I continued, “I’m sorry to have put you to all this trouble and expense. We have been deceived.—Good-bye, Mrs. Morrow.”

The poor drooping woman, half-starved, wholly loyal, arose and turned away. I could see the repressed tears struggling to her eyes.

Looking back now, the memory almost brings the tears to mine. But at the moment I was too angry, too mortified, to perceive the sad note of the situation. God help us all: we try to do good, and because we allow our own feelings to influence us, we are cruel when we profess to be kind, merciless when we talk mercy, hard-hearted when we assume philanthropy. My wounded self-love had obscured my judgment; and so in unreasoning wrath I sent away a woman sadly needing strength and consolation, more weakened, more disturbed than ever, and wounded to the quick the loving heart of an innocent child.

CHAPTER VII

THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURE OF MICHAEL THE OFFICE-BOY AND JERRY THE JANITOR

“**I** SAY, Father,” said Michael during the routine work of the next morning. “I told Jerry about that Morrow mix-up yesterday.”

Jerry, the reader should know, is the engineer and janitor of St. Xavier School. He is a young Irishman of impulsive disposition, having at that time a wife and a little baby upon which he doted.

“Why did you tell him?”

“Oh, I don’t know. It was a pretty good story you know, and I kinder thought it would interest him.”

“And did it?”

“It certainly did. When I told Jerry about the children nearly starving, he sighed like the engine of a freight train when it’s got a big load.”

The picture was vivid, if overdrawn.

“Didn’t he say anything?”

“Say! He made speeches. He told me never to drink a glass of beer as long as I lived, and then I wouldn’t starve my children. I got back at him, and asked him how about himself. He said, ‘I only take a glass of beer now and then.’ I said ‘That’s what every saloon bum in this parish says.’ And that’s true, Father. Then Jerry got mad and offered to throw me out of the window.”

“How did you escape that, Michael?”

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"Oh, easily. I said, 'Jerry, before you throw me out, let me tell you about Mrs. Morrow's black eye.' That fetched Jerry, and when I told him all I knew he hopped up and down this office, grunting and choking to beat the band. Then he told me what he thought about men that starved their families for beer and whiskey—and what he did think about them was a plenty. He said that a little baby was worth all the beer that ever came out of Noah's ark.

"I say, Father, why do people spend their time drinking beer? Why don't they take chocolate soda?"

"Well, Michael what was the result of your talk with Jerry?"

"It's a long story, Father."

"Let's hear it."

"Well, Jerry, after making a lot of speeches said that something ought to be done. I asked him, what? He said, 'Michael, we must get the *man* into line.' 'How are you going to do it?' said I. 'Leave that to me,' said he. Then he got me to promise to go with him and visit the family that night. I didn't care about going, but Jerry insisted. The fact is, Jerry didn't know the way, and I did. That's why he wanted me, I think. So after supper I met Jerry at Sixth and Sycamore."

"Upon my word," I put in.

"Yes, we met all right; and on the road down you should have heard the line of talk Jerry handed out to me. He said that the only way to bring people to the right path was by kindness. Scolding was no good, punishing people or starting any kind of a rough house was bad

—always bad. Jerry got so worked up talking this way, that we were both near to crying; and when we came to a little grocery on Sycamore between Third and Fourth, nothing would do Jerry but to go in and get fifty cents' worth of provisions done up in a little basket, not quite as large as the hats the women are wearing nowadays. Jerry didn't have but forty cents about him, and I had to loan him the last dime I had. He promised to pay me the first thing this morning; he hasn't."

"Never mind that dime, Michael. Go on."

"We did go on, Father; and Jerry explained how he would present the basket to the mother, and then get to talking with the father. 'The great mistake, Michael,' he said, 'with these charity sharps is that they go pottering about among the women. Why, Michael,' he said, 'you can't do nothing with women; they don't know their own minds long enough to make them up. What you want to do is to get the men. You can reason with men, Michael,' says he. 'You can get them to see things just as easy as not. And then, Michael,' says he, 'once you've got the men going right, you'll have the women feeding out of your hand. Then he got back to his first line of talk. He told me always to be patient and gentle with people even when good common-sense told me to go at them with both fists. He said that the man who kept his temper and was always kind was the man who always won out.'"

"We'll have to get Jerry to preach next Sunday," I observed.

"Well, he did give me a real good sermon;

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and by the time he had finished, in fact, before he had finished, we reached the building. 'Now, remember, Michael, as long as you live,' he said, 'in dealing with unfortunate people like these, never to lose patience. Much as I admire Father Carney, if he only was a little bit—just a little bit—more patient, there'd be no standing him.' "

"Did you agree with him, Michael?"

"I—why, yes, Father—at the time I did."

"Thank you, Michael. Proceed."

"By this time, Father, we were on our way up the last flight of stairs. And then we began to hear some very loud talking up above. It was a man's voice we heard. He was saying that he didn't want anybody interfering with him, if he wanted a drink; that he was a free-born American citizen, and don't you forget it; that if anybody from his wife up to the President of the United States tried to interfere with him when he wanted a drink, he was the guy who'd show them where they got off. 'That's Mr. Morrow talking,' I said to Jerry. 'The old fool,' growled Jerry. Then we heard another voice. It was his wife's. She said that the children were half starved because he was drinking too much.

"'So you mean to say I'm a drunkard?' cried Morrow. 'I'm afraid you are,' answered his wife. Then we heard him curse, and then a loud squeal."

"Shriek, Michael."

"Yes—a shriek. We were at the door by that time—me, with the basket on my arm, and Jerry in front. He gave a thundering knock

at the door, and when Mr. Morrow said to come in, he threw open the door. The woman was crouching in the farthest corner with three children sticking to her—her arms were up as if to guard her face—and the man was walking toward us. 'What do you want?' he said. 'Good evening, everybody,' says Jerry. 'I want to see Mr. Morrow.' 'I'm the man,' says Morrow, 'what is it?' 'I want to speak to you in private,' says Jerry. 'It's important.' Morrow stepped out, and Jerry closed the door. 'You're not a policeman are you?' says Morrow. 'Indeed, and I'm not,' says Jerry. 'Suppose, Mr. Morrow, we come downstairs and have a drink.' 'Sure,' says Morrow, and down the steps they went arm in arm like two long-lost brothers. When we got to the second floor we walked to the front part of the corridor, where that woman lives with her son and two daughters that Alice told you about. You remember?"

"Most distinctly, Michael," I answered. I could see that Michael had something worth telling. "Go on, my boy; don't leave anything out."

"There was a smoking lamp at the furthest end of the corridor—the end looking north on Third St., and right below it was a water faucet, and Jerry marched him up, turned on the faucet, and said in a voice that wasn't exactly a whisper, 'Now, you son of a sea-cook, take your drink.' That," continued the veracious Michael, "was not exactly what Jerry called him, in fact, he——"

"You may let it go at that, Michael."

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"Thank you, Father," said Michael, visibly relieved.

"Then he gave Mr. Morrow a squeeze and a whirl, and before you could know it he had his head under that water faucet. 'The cussin' and swearin' that Mr. Morrow let out would almost scare you; but Jerry stopped that pretty quick. He jerked his head round, and the water got into Mr. Morrow's mouth and set him to coughing and choking something awful. Then he began kicking Jerry's shins, but Jerry just held on and didn't seem to notice at all. 'You will drink beer,' yelled Jerry—'Hey, Michael, turn on the faucet stronger.' I turned it all the way. My leg is sore yet from the kick I got. I thought Mr. Morrow would be drowned, but Jerry didn't seem to take notice. By this time the woman and her boy and two girls were out in the hall, and making comments. The woman had a face that looked like a flower-garden in summer—a flower-garden with nothing but red flowers. But Jerry didn't notice them either. 'You will beat your wife, you old beer-barrel.' Mr. Morrow kept on kicking. He landed this time square on Jerry's shin. 'Stop your kicking, or I'll hold your head here forever,' roared Jerry. Father, it's a wonder by this time the whole police and fire department wasn't there—Jerry was making such a row. He didn't know it. I guess he thought he was whispering. You see, he was mad all through. Mr. Morrow gave another kick and then stopped! Jerry was choking him. It was all quiet for a minute—nothing but the sound of the water spouting

over that man's head. Jerry was dripping water, too; but he didn't notice it. Then that woman whose face was all broke out into a flower garden says, 'It's a wonder a man can't take an extra glass of beer or two without a lot of busy-bodies coming around and trying to drown him.' 'Woman,' bawled Jerry, 'mind your business.' With that, he took the man's head from under the faucet. Mr. Morrow had no fight left in him: he stood there blinking and sputtering. 'Jerry,' I whispered, 'you're forgetting the basket.' 'Give it here,' he shouted. I handed it over to Jerry, and the next thing you know he clapped that basket, grub and all, over Mr. Morrow's head: he made it fit too, somehow or other. Just then, Mrs. Morrow came running down the stairs and when she saw Jerry bonneting her husband she screamed. At that, out came the woman with the all-rose face from her room with a broom in her hand, and made toward Jerry. 'Run,' cried Jerry, and down the stairs we went nearly breaking our necks, and not stopping until we were out on Third."

During this graphic recital, I tried in vain to keep a sober face.

"You and Jerry should get up a new organization for practical philanthropy.—By the way, isn't Jerry out there now? Call him in."

Jerry entered looking too virtuous to be true.

"How are your shins, Jerry?"

Jerry looked at Michael, and, understanding that the young gentleman had told the adventure, burst into a laugh that caused a flutter, as I afterward learned, among the eighth grade girls just above.

"I have been very much edified, Jerry, by Michael's account of your charity work."

Jerry grinned and reached for his knee which he rubbed gingerly.

"It isn't all roses—this charity work, Jerry."

"I should say not, Father."

"Where's that ten cents you owe Michael?"

"Oh!" cried Jerry, "I forgot all about it. I'll go and get it right off." And Jerry turned to go: he was anxious to escape.

"Hold on, Jerry: I'll pay that dime myself. Here you are Michael," I continued, handing the youngster a quarter, "and don't squander it. I understand, Jerry, that you've got some very good ideas as to how we should deal with poor people, especially when there's drink in the family."

"You must get the *man* first—always the *man*," put in Michael. "A lot of these charity sharps go pottering around after the women folks, and there's nothing doin'."

"You little divil," said Jerry. It was an attempt on his part at a whisper. Any one in the next room could have heard it.

"And," continued Michael with solemn face, though his eyes were dancing, "you must never lose your patience; you must be all charity. Jerry is the guy who put the tea in charity."

Jerry said nothing; but there were interior rumblings expressive of intense disgust. Also as I saw out of the corner of my eye, there were certain pantomimic signs directed by Jerry at Michael expressing clearly his intention of punching, on the first favorable opportunity, that young gentleman's head.

"And on no account," Michael went on, "is there to be any harshness, and especially no rough-house."

"What about environment, Jerry?" I asked.

"What's that, Father?"

"Environment. Did you look up the environment of the family?"

"I didn't notice any what-you-call-it, Father. You see I didn't have a good look into their room. We didn't stay as long as I intended."

"I should say not," interjected Michael, "and the way we did get out with a woman chasing us with a broomstick was a sight for sore eyes."

"Sure," said Jerry, eyeing the youth with great disfavor, "the sight of your broomstick legs and your pie-face would start a whole blind asylum to going to moving-picture shows."

"And then, Jerry," I continued, "did you go into the matter of heredity?"

"I went as far as their room all right," answered Jerry.

"Ah, Jerry, you may be a practical philanthropist; but you're not at all scientific."

"Ain't I?" inquired Jerry anxiously.

"No; you are not."

"All the same," put in the relentless Michael, "he gave Mr. Morrow the water treatment. If that ain't science I like to know what is."

"Cut it out, you pop-eyed skeleton," cried Jerry.

"If you had been scientific, you'd have spent a week at least in studying the surroundings of the Morrow family—that's environment; and then you'd have spent a month or two in find-

ing out all about Mr. Morrow's forebears, all the way up to his great-grandfather."

"Sure, I don't want to know any more of his relations—the old beer-barrel."

"That's heredity," I went on. "If you'd been more scientific you'd have done nothing."

"Well, then, I'm glad I'm not scientific."

"But he was so patient," said Michael sweetly. "He walked down one flight of stairs arm in arm with Mr. Morrow. The two of 'em looked like a pair of cooing doves."

Jerry glared at Michael and opened his mouth to say what he thought of him, but, the proper words not coming, remained open-mouthed, while Michael serenely continued.

"Jerry's got you skinned on charity, Father Carney. He says you're just great, but you'd be the biggest man that ever came down the pike, if you only had a teeny-weeny bit more of patience. Oh, Jerry's studied it out. He knows what he's talking about. I never saw any one so patient as he was, as he stood for ever so long, holding Mr. Morrow under the water-spout."

Jerry's mouth remained open; but the blood had rushed to his face. He was boiling over—and speechless. I came to the rescue.

"Jerry," I said, "I must say *I* wouldn't do what you did."

"You're not patient enough," interpolated Michael.

"Be good enough not to interrupt me, Michael."

"Can't you listen to the Father," cried Jerry recovering his speech. "Little guttersnipes like you are all tongue and no ears."

"But all the same, Jerry," I went on, "you did what I'm inclined to believe was the right thing."

"Did you hear that, you hot-air furnace?" and Jerry glared at Michael.

"You acted on impulse: and sometimes impulse is the very thing to act upon."

"Thank you, Father," said Jerry beginning to smile.

"Only," I continued, "I wouldn't advise you to get the habit of using the water faucet whenever you, in your charity, go pottering after the men."

"Did that limb of Satan tell your reverence that I said you might be a little more patient?"

"I rather think he did."

Jerry looked as though he could never smile again.

"Never mind, Jerry; you were perfectly right. Cheer up, Jerry."

"Everybody's doin' it," added Michael.

CHAPTER VIII

INTRODUCING FRANCIS MORROW AND A NOVEL CHRISTMAS LETTER

SISTER DOROTHY paid me a visit that afternoon.

"Did you hear what happened at the Morr-
rows' last night?" she asked.

"What was it, Sister? Anything unusual?"

"Two ruffians, one of them a giant in size, called on Mr. Morrow, and got him to come outside his rooms. When they got him out, they seized him and carried him to a water faucet, and kept him there till he was nearly drowned. They would have killed him, Alice tells me, if the neighbors hadn't come out with sticks and brooms and driven them away."

"What could have been their object?" I asked.
"Perhaps they wanted to rob him."

"No: they didn't do anything to show they were thieves."

"Possibly," I continued, "it was a visit of charity."

"Charity!" exclaimed the good Sister.
"That's about the last thing I could imagine."

Michael had meanwhile hidden his face behind a large geography.

"You see, Michael," I said as the astonished Sister withdrew, "the system of charity you and your bosom friend have inaugurated is such a departure that people, instead of taking you for philanthropists, imagine you to be a pair of cut-

throats. Didn't the little girls recognize you and Jerry?"

"I hope not. We were out in the dark, and didn't fairly get into their room; and when Mrs. Morrow came running down and screamed we both lit out before she could see us well. The lamp was smoky, and didn't give much light. I say, Father, I hope you won't tell anybody what me and Jerry did last night. We might get pinched."

"I promise, Michael, to keep it a dead secret."

To this day the Morrows do not guess the identity of the two philanthropists who, in their excess of brotherly love, held the head of Mr. Morrow for some five minutes or more under a water faucet.

As a result of Jerry's philanthropy, for two months and some weeks Mr. Morrow was a changed man. He assured his wife that he was done with liquor forever. He got a new position, and kept it. Prosperity had come; the children showed it in their faces and in their attire. Much of this, I learned from Miss Margaret; for, I am compelled to say, little Alice visited me no more. When I chanced to meet her, she always smiled and bowed with the winning grace so peculiarly hers; but the candor, the confiding openness were gone. Had she lost faith in me? or was she ashamed? I could not answer the question. Elsie, too, kept out of my way.

Meanwhile, Miss Margaret Dalton, a veritable angel of charity, was in close communication with the unfortunate family. Through her

mediation Mrs. Morrow, who had not been practising her religion for several years, was persuaded to return to the Sacraments. The poor little woman, like so many mothers overburdened with the strain of keeping the children in bread and raiment, had simply lost sight of her own spiritual needs. Extreme poverty, no less than extreme wealth, causes the deflection of thousands from the Church.

Although Alice visited me no more I had no reason to worry about her. The child was still leader in her class, and, through Sister Dorothy acting in my name, was supplied with such literature as I thought would best develop her imagination and her morals. Busy as I was with a multiplicity of affairs, I did nothing to re-establish with Alice our old relations. Of course, my self-love was hurt that the child should apparently think less of me; and the same self-love kept me blind to the cruelty of my words towards her. In fact, I practically forgot the language I had used, and the sentiments I had expressed. Alice did not forget.

The school year passed away, vacation came, and in September classes were again resumed. Alice and Elsie were on hand for the opening day, and with them they brought their brother, Francis, aged seven, a pretty little fellow with flowing ringlets, for the wearing of which, through the thoughtful attention of his little classmates in the first grade, he did daily penance in the succeeding months. A little boy with curls must be of heroic stuff.

"Good morning, Father," said Alice, "I hope you have had a pleasant vacation. This

is my little brother, Francis. Francis, shake hands with Father Carney."

In answer to which, Francis put his finger in his mouth, and retreated to safe shelter behind his two sisters, from which coign of vantage he peeped out at me with large, investigating eyes.

"Why, Francis," remonstrated Alice, "you are always talking about Father Carney; and you said you wanted to see him so bad."

"I want to do home," said Francis lugubriously.

There was some candy on my desk. I picked up a piece, and held it toward the disgruntled youth. His finger came out of his mouth with noticeable alacrity, and he stepped forward, and took the candy with promptness.

"What do you say, Francis?" asked Alice beaming.

"Thank you, sir."

"Sir!" admonished Alice.

"Thank you, sir Father," amended the little boy. And for many a day to come I was to Francis "Sir Father."

"Well, Alice," I inquired, "how is everything going?"

I could to a certain extent anticipate the answer. The two girls were nicely dressed, their color was good, their eyes shining. Both, notably Elsie, had grown taller.

"Father, we've had a delightful vacation. Papa's been working steadily; and he says he wouldn't be at all surprised if his ship did come in. For most of the vacation we were stopping with an uncle of mine at Morning View,

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Indiana; and we had just no end of fun. I learned how to milk cows."

"And I," said Elsie, "learned to make hay."

"And, Father," continued Alice, "they had ever so many geese, and I used to go out bare-foot with a long stick in my hand and play I was goose-girl. Sometimes I'd play goose-girl for days and days. And Elsie, who wore rompers, would play the fairy prince, and come out and take me away."

"I married her thirteen times," said the accurate and solemn Elsie.

"And Francis was with us. He tried to teach the little chickens how to swim, didn't you, Francis?"

"Yes, I did," said the youth, who by this time was on my knee, not so much in token of his growing confidence in me as for the reason that it was a good strategic position for getting the candy, an advantage of which he was by no means slow to avail himself.

Just then, Michael, in all the splendor of a dazzling tie and a new suit, stepped in to announce that there were some people in the outer office to see me.

"Why, Michael," cried Alice, "how do you do?"

"I'm able to take a little nourishment, thank you, and I sit up every day."

"You haven't been sick, have you?"

"Not so as you could notice it."

"I thought so. You look very well, Michael; and very handsome."

"Now what do you think of that!" growled Michael.

"That's a beautiful tie you're wearing. It's cute."

Michael's face was growing red fast.

"And your suit is just elegant. I never saw you look so nice before."

"Can you beat that!" ejaculated Michael and incontinently shut himself out.

"Well, Francis," I said as I stood that youth on his feet and arose from my chair, "do you still want to go home?"

"This place," said Francis, "is dood enough for me."

"He was a little bashful first," explained Alice, "but he's very fond of you. He's always talking about Father Carney, and every night he says 'Dod bless Father Carney.' Don't you, Francis?"

"Yes, I do," answered the youngster.

"I taught him myself, Father; and, oh, Father, I'm going to try my best this year. I'll study, and I'll tell the truth—and so will Elsie—and I'm going to be a good little girl. You are, too, aren't you, Elsie?"

"Cross my heart," came the earnest answer.

"Thank you, children; and as you are so good in praying for me, I am going to make it a point to remember you every day, especially at my Mass, as I have been doing the past eight or nine months."

"Oh, Father," cried Alice coming up on her toes, "have you really remembered me every day?"

"Surely, my dear."

"After that—that *lie*." The bitterness, the

scorn she put into that ugly monosyllable was dramatic.

"Forget that you ever told it, my child."

"I'll never, *never* forget it," vowed Alice, coming down on her heels with savage emphasis. "And, Father, have you pardoned me?"

"Long ago, Alice."

"Oh!" cried Alice, her eyes shining and her face flushing red, "I thought you couldn't. Father, I'm so happy. And so is Elsie, aren't you, Elsie?"

"I feel like a morning star," avowed Elsie.

Pulling the two into line with herself Alice executed her famous curtsy, Elsie bobbed, and Francis ducked his head. This ceremony had been evidently pre-arranged.

And so the new school year, as it had begun, went on pleasantly for the Morrows. Miss Margaret kept her eye on the home and brought me most favorable reports. The loyal little wife had some justification for her assertion that no better husband, no better father could be found than Mr. Morrow—when sober. Between September and Christmas he was out of work but once, his period of unemployment lasting only for a week.

At Christmas time, among other letters, I received the following:

"DEAR FATHER CARNEY: Once more the Merry Christmas bells are ringing out their message of glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. Once more, we are reminded that

'Christ Our Lord the Saviour,
Was born on Christmas day.'

"Dear Father, may nothing you dismay, on Christmas day or any other day in the whole year. You are a priest who takes the place of these angels, for you are singing the same song—the good tidings that the Babe came down

'To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray.'

"Of course, dear Father, you don't *sing* the good tidings; you talk them, and I don't think the angels would *sing* the good tidings either, if they made a regular thing of it.

"On this day we feel good to all. But especially we feel good to all who have been especially kind to us. And, Father, nobody knows how awfully good you've been to me. If I was dead, and you came near me, I think I'd be able to say 'Thank you.'

"On Christmas day, I hope, dear Father, that the Infant Jesus will bring you everything you need and more.

'O tidings of Comfort and Joy!'

"Once more a Merry Xmas; and I do so wish I had made my First Communion so as I could go for your intention. But I can pray and I will pray for you, dear Father, who forgave me.

"Your loving child,
"ALICE MORROW."

There was a number of other letters like this—only none quite so original—which stirred me

strangely—and humbled me. Who was I that so many innocent little hearts should think of me with love and pray for me with fervor. Poets have gone into ecstasies over the laughter of a little child. What is their laughter to their love? No poet has answered that question. It is beyond and above all poetry. And yet, to gain it, one needs but to be kind, sympathetic, and to show the little ones that *maxima reverentia*—that supreme reverence, which, the poet justly says, is their due. And even if one fails now and then in kindness and in sympathy—there should never be failure in reverence—these little ones forget and forgive so easily, and kiss the hand that smites them.

CHAPTER IX

INTRODUCING MR. MORROW AT HIS WORST AND
DR. KELLY AT HIS BEST

ON THE morning after Christmas the porter of St. Xavier's College met me as I was coming up from breakfast.

"Father Carney, there's a little girl over in the pastor's parlor waiting to see you."

"I found Alice huddled up in a chair. On seeing me she arose, not, however, with her usual sprightliness.

"Oh, Father!" she said, and burst into tears.

"Don't cry, Alice. What is it, my dear? Is papa out of work again?"

Alice, after a short struggle, controlled herself.

"It's worse than that: he's drinking again."

My heart sank. Fading away, "like the unsubstantial pageant of a vision," I saw that happy, though humble tenement home, in which sobs were to replace smiles, tears, merry laughter, and blows, the tender expressions of endearment.

"When did he begin, Alice?"

"He went out last night to visit some friends, and when he came home at two this morning, he was shouting and—and—cursing, Father."

"Alice, I am sincerely sorry."

"And, Father, please, *please* don't give him over to the Humane Society."

"Why not, my dear?"

"Because he's so good, and we all love him so, and it would be terrible if he got arrested and his name got into the papers. It's so—so—*common*, you know."

"Alice, you may be sure that I'll not report him to the Humane Society. You tell mama to keep him home to-day, and I'll come down to-night and see him."

"Oh, will you, Father?" exclaimed Alice, beaming, rising upon her toes, and throwing out her hands wing-fashion. "How kind! We'll expect you to-night. And, Father, you'll say a prayer for him, won't you?"

"I certainly will."

"Good-bye, Father."

With her sweeping curtsy she was gone. Really it was a sudden disappearance.

True to my promise, I knocked at the door of the Morrow family, as the bells of St. Xavier were ringing eight. The door was opened by a delegation, Alice, Elsie, Frank, and tiny Elizabeth, all of them dressed in taste that was actually exquisite. They were, in looks and in attire, lovely little children, and, as they appeared that night, fit to grace the mansion of any millionaire. In many a tenement these little flowers of the earth change poverty into wealth, and touch the sordid surroundings into a strange and unnamed beauty.

All smiles, the children, saying nothing, made their respective and carefully rehearsed salutes: Alice, her elaborate curtsy, Elsie, a less elaborate sweep, Frank, his little bob, and tiny Elizabeth, if I may so describe it, a glide—one foot remaining firmly set and the other going back

so far that Alice was obliged to help the little miss get it back again.

"Come in, Father," said Alice. "Let me have your hat and umbrella. We didn't think you would come out in this rain."

During these ceremonies, I took in the room.

It was small, indeed, and rather close; but clean as a Dutch parlor. In one corner was the stove, as black and as shining as a stove could well be. Above it, in perfect array, glittered, upon shelves and hooks, pots and pans. A row of crockery showed some very cheap china-ware to the best advantage; and a dresser near by was decorated with those pretty little gimcracks, which give an air of poverty in a tenement. But what surprised me most of all were long garlands of ivy with here and there red holly berries hanging from the ceiling and giving the humble room a very Christmassy appearance, indeed. Mrs. Morrow herself, smiling timidly, had arisen from a chair beside the stove, in her hands, as I expected, needle and thread and a child's garment.

"Welcome, Father, and a Merry Christmas to you," she said, advancing.

"How beautiful everything looks in your home," I observed as I took her hand. "Your children would brighten any place; but this room even without the children would be a sort of bower of beauty."

"Alice and Elsie have been working all day, Father, to get things in shape for you. They said you were coming and somehow or other they managed to get these garlands, and worked like little beavers."

"I helped, too," protested Francis.

"So you did, my dear," assented the mother, "and without you, I don't see how they could have finished."

Francis thereupon threw out his chest and smiled at everybody and everything in general.

"Where is Mr. Morrow?"

"He's in bed. He's *sick*," she added with a wry smile. "All day he has been lying in bed. Oh, Father, thank God, anyhow, that he didn't begin drinking till last night, else we should have had no Christmas; as it was, yesterday, up to nightfall, was the happiest day we've had in years; the children all got presents, and—and——" Here she broke down, and put her handkerchief to her tired eyes.

"Excuse me," she said, recovering herself, "and I'll try to get my husband to come in," saying which she opened the door of the adjoining room, and entering shut it after her.

Accepting the invitation to seat myself, my knees were at once captured by Francis and Margaret, who without any ado at once climbed upon them with the easy air of proprietorship. Nor did they exhibit the least surprise when I dipped into my coat pocket and brought out some candy. I may add that for the rest of the interview I was saved the trouble of performing this service for them; they attended to it themselves. Alice and Elsie, meanwhile, were bringing me, bit by bit, their dolls and other gifts for inspection and approval. The candy was almost exhausted and the gifts all shown, when the door opened again, and Mr. Morrow walked in. He was a fine looking man, tall, slightly built, with

a light mustache and a decidedly blonde complexion. He looked harmless enough: only his blood-shot eyes and sheepish expression gave hint of his recent relapse.

"Merry Christmas, Father Carney," he said, advancing to meet me.

"The same to you, my friend. I see that your little ones have had a merry Christmas, sure enough."

"Yes, Father, they did."

I motioned Mrs. Morrow to take the children into the other room.

"You nearly spoiled it for them last night."

"I was out with some friends."

"And you had a good time?"

"Yes, Father."

"And by a good time you mean swilling liquor till you lost your reason and made yourself so sick that you're hardly able to stand up. Look at your hands, man: they're trembling. Your nerves are gone."

"That's so, Father."

"And you call that having a good time, do you? In the name of God, man, tell me what it is to have a bad time, if you call that sort of thing having a good time?"

"Father, I'm going to quit."

"If not for yourself, then for the sake of these dear little children and that loyal wife of yours. Just look at your children now. They are clean, well-dressed, healthy, and good. Suppose you had been drinking these last six months, it would be quite different, and you know it. When did you go to confession?"

"Five years ago."

"No wonder God has allowed you to suffer. A careless Catholic need not expect the blessing of God on his daily life. You must go to confession and resolve to stop drinking for good."

"I'll do it, Father, I promise you. To-night my head is splitting, and I'm not able to think—Oh, what a fool I've been! I'll be ready to-morrow to make a new start. Father, I'd like to go to confession to you, if you please; you've been very good to my little ones, and they are talking of you all the time."

"How would to-morrow evening at seven o'clock do?" I asked.

"Anything that suits you, suits me, Father."

"Very well: be in St. Xavier's Church to-morrow evening at seven o'clock. Now, Mrs. Morrow," I continued, raising my voice, "come in: we've had our little talk."

Presently I took my leave, with a thankful heart. The possibility of an ideal home—a loyal wife, lovely and bright children, a sober and industrious husband—gave promise of at length becoming an actuality. Alice insisted on seeing me downstairs. Once we were out of earshot she stopped, holding me by the hand.

"Father, is papa going to confession?"

"Yes, my dear, I think he is. He has promised me to go to confession to-morrow evening."

Alice's face became transfigured.

"Oh, Father! I've been praying for it day and night."

"Your father, my dear, means to do right, but he's weak. Keep on praying for him."

"Shall I walk home with you, Father?" Alice asked on our reaching the street.

"Oh, no, my dear: I've got my angel for a companion."

"You have more than one, I think," said Alice simply. "Good night, Father, sleep tight."

Before I could turn, she was literally dancing up the stairs. Our Fairy of the Snows brought fairyland into that old ramshackle tenement.

On Wednesday evening, punctual to the stroke of the clock, I entered St. Xavier's Church and made my way to my confessional. There were, I observed, several men and a number of women at their devotions; but in the casual glance I gave them I failed to discover the presence of Mr. Morrow. Scarcely had I seated myself, when I heard some one enter the confessional. Opening the slide, I was about to give the customary blessing when a child's voice gave me pause.

"Father, I haven't come to confession. I'm Alice."

There was bad news in her accents.

"And where is your father, my child?"

"He got very sick last night about an hour after you left, Father. And then he said he would have to get some medicine or he'd go crazy. Mama wanted to go to the drugstore for him, but he wouldn't let her. So he went out himself, and mama and I stayed up all night. We said our beads six times at least waiting for him. He got back at four o'clock this morning, and—and——" here the little voice broke into sobs—"and, Father, he was drunk. He threw the lamp at mama, and he beat me for

staying up; and—he's drinking yet. And he's making me run out for liquor."

"Poor man," I said, "it is his one weakness, Alice, and you must be patient. Surely all our prayers will do some good."

"And, Father, I want to thank you for all the trouble you've taken. Oh, I was so happy last night. I felt as if I could fly. Mama and I were so sure he was going to confession. And, Father, I'm afraid he'll kill mama: he gets so savage when he's drinking. I don't mind his beating me—so much."

"Did he hurt you, my child?"

"Yes, he did, Father; but he generally only uses his hand on me. Last night he used his fists, and my legs and arms are black and blue. I'm a little lame, too. I found it hard to run here to-night; my right knee is a little stiff."

By this time, I could feel my blood tingling in every vein. I was furious.

"He ought to be poisoned!" I said.

"But he's only that way when he's drinking, Father. Oh, if you knew him when he's himself! But I must go, or he'll miss me, and beat me again. Father, give me your blessing."

I blessed her and repaired to my room in a state of mind far from calm. The picture of our little Fairy of the Snows in the hands of a man, turned beast by drink—beaten, shaken, pounded—rose so vividly before my eyes that for almost an hour I could not dismiss it. I could hear the innocent child's cries of pain, could see the shame, grief, and terror in her eyes and face. Oh, God, that in a civilized and Christian land such things can be! Gradually,

I seemed to hear not her cry, but the sobs and moans of countless wives and children in countless homes of drunken fathers. The low sad music of humanity rose up into a wail. Presently, I was meditating and praying. More than an hour and a half must have passed, when I was brought to myself by a knock at my door.

"Father Carney," said the porter, his eyes big with excitement, "there's a girl in the parlor. She's wild-looking and she wants to see you in a hurry."

My heart jumped. It must be Alice, and a visit from her at nine of the night could spell nothing but calamity. Could the worst have happened? Had the child been right in fearing that Morrow in drunken rage would murder his wife? The porter had scarcely delivered his message, when I swung by him and clattered down the staircase.

Alice it was—standing in the parlor wringing her hands.

"Oh, Father," she cried, running to me on my entrance, and pillowing her head on my arm, "I've done something awful, and I'm afraid!"

So it was not a murder after all. I breathed more easily. Gently lifting the child's head, I said:

"What is it, Alice?"

"Papa sent me for beer three times, and struck me once. The fourth time I thought I'd try and stop him. I'd heard about a way, and I thought I'd try it. So I put some medicine in the beer the fourth time. He drank it, and got sick right away. As soon as he began to look queer, I ran out, and came to you."

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"What medicine did you put in?"

"I don't know, Father. It's this."

Alice produced a small bottle which she had kept concealed within her left sleeve.

I held it up to the light, and read: "*Laudanum*."

"How much did you put in?"

"I don't know exactly. I guess about a tablespoonful, it may have been less, or a little more."

"Wait," I said, and shot out of the parlor and up the stairs to the telephone booth. My good friend Dr. Kelly lived, fortunately for me on more than one occasion, quite near.

"Dr. Kelly's office," came a voice.

"That you, doctor?"

"Yes."

"This is Father Carney. I've a hurry call—can you start at once?"

"My buggy is at the door."

"Good. Come right over to the pastor's residence, and I'll go with you. It is a case of poison in beer—*laudanum*—a tablespoonful or more. The man that's poisoned is a heavy drinker."

"I'm coming!" said the doctor and hung up the receiver.

Although it took me hardly a minute to change my cassock for my street attire, the doctor in his buggy was awaiting me before I had again gone down the stairs.

"Come along, quick, Alice," I said, and together we trotted—literally trotted—from the door of the pastor's house to Sycamore Street, a distance of almost half a block. I fairly threw

Alice into the buggy, jumped in after her, and at the same time, gave the number and street to the ready doctor, who at once flicked the horse and, thanks to the late hour and the absence of traffic officers, set off at a pace livelier than was legal for our destination.

"Tell me what I'm to know," said the doctor as we dashed past Sixth Street.

"The little girl wanted to stop her father from drinking and she put medicine in his beer. The medicine happened to be laudanum."

"Girl, where did you get that laudanum?"

"Mama had some in a little bottle for her toothache."

"Did you know it was poison?" asked the doctor, as we swung east, turning from Sycamore to Third.

"Poison!!!" almost screamed the child.

"If you've given him enough," said the good doctor, who also was sarcastic, "you've certainly cured him of his taste for beer effectually."

Fortunately Alice did not understand the import of his words.

"Does anybody know you put that—that—medicine in his beer?" he continued.

"No one, but you and Father Carney."

"Well, no one else is to know—not even your mother. Do you understand, young lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you keep this a dead secret, or I'll cut your head off."

Alice was duly impressed, no less by the

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fierceness of the doctor's voice, than by the savageness of his threat.

"I'll keep it, sir, cross my heart."

We were now in front of the tenement.

"Come up at your leisure, Father," said Dr. Kelly. "Tie the horse will you, and little Miss Lightfoot and I will go ahead at double speed. I'll let you know when I want you."

When I reached the living-room I found the wife and children huddled together. Mrs. Morrow was very frightened.

"Oh, Father, thank you for getting the doctor. I didn't know what to do. My husband has drunk himself to death, I'm afraid."

"Woman, come in here quick," called the doctor from the inner room.

We listened to the various sounds and the whispered voices within for what seemed to me an unconscionable time. At length the doctor came out with a broad smile on his face.

"He's all right, but he won't want any beer for a long time. Madam," he said, addressing Mrs. Morrow, "your husband poisoned himself drinking beer, and only for the quick action of your clever little girl would be a dead man. Tell him to-morrow that he's to drink no more liquor; liquor is poison to him. As for you, Father Carney, there is no need to anoint him, and he's in no state to make his confession now. But to-morrow early you call in, and you'll find you've got a very docile penitent."

Taking the wife aside, the doctor gave her a few directions, and presently we were on our way out.

"Young lady," said the physician to our es-

cort, Alice, "you might have killed your father. As it is, there's no harm done. In fact, it's going to turn out a good thing."

Dr. Kelly was right. Mr. Morrow went to confession and received Holy Communion in the most edifying sentiments; he pledged himself to abstain from liquor and began what appeared to be a new life.

All this I told the doctor a week later.

"And now, doctor," I added, "what's your bill?"

"Let me see," mused the doctor; "my horse hurt his foot going down Fourth to Third; I lost my night's sleep and spent two hours of hard work. Suppose we call it fifty dollars."

"Yes: *suppose*," I said, with a strong accent on the last word.

"Of course," continued Dr. Kelly, "with the usual discount to the clergy."

"And how much is that?"

"One hundred per cent."

"Why not make the bill a thousand dollars, doctor?"

"To be sure, why not? But I didn't think of it in time."

CHAPTER X

INTRODUCING THE COMMUNION CLASS OF SIX HUNDRED, AND ENTERTAINING ANGELS UNAWARES

AS REGARDS the Morrow family, everything was as it should be for a period of over a year and a half. The children grew in loveliness and grace; health and youth returned apparently to Mrs. Morrow, and the father himself became the model head of a Catholic family. He was employed, with the exception of an occasional week, and actually started a bank account. I remember the day when Alice with shining eyes told me how her father had put away his first dollar; I remember how she was able to tell me six months later that there were ninety-nine dollars to his account, and how he was thinking of moving to some place where the surroundings would be healthier and better morally for his growing children. Alice had set her heart on moving to Pioneer Street.

"It is so near the church," she said, "and then I can go to Communion, after I make it, as often as I wish."

Many a visit of inspection did she make to that friendly little backwater of a street—a backwater happily outside the seething stream of downtown city life.

She came in one morning with dancing eyes. "Oh, Father, I've found the very place I want.

You know that little two-story house where the Murveys live?"

"Very well, Alice."

"They're going to move out on the first of the month, and we can get it for seventeen dollars. To-morrow, I'm going to bring papa up to see it; and I'm sure he'll take it. Then we'll be near you, and nearly all the girls I go with are on that street, or near it. There are no nicer girls anywhere."

But the next day, which had been so full of promise, brought its heavy disappointment. Mrs. Morrow suddenly took very sick, and, through the kindness of the unwearying Miss Margaret Dalton, was sent to the Good Samaritan Hospital.

It was Elsie who brought me the news; and three days later, Alice came, with saddened face, to tell me that her father had been discharged.

"The old story?"

"Yes," said the child, "he's broken his pledge again. But it is not so bad, Father. Mama is getting well, the Sister at the hospital told me; and, Father, do you know what?"

"What is it?"

"Can't you guess?"

"The ship's coming in?"

"The ship 'Hardly-Ever,' Captain Romance?" Alice laughed, for she was now sufficiently advanced to understand her father's allegory. "I'm afraid that ship is headed for the breakers now. But it's almost as good as the ship coming in. Father, God has sent mama a little baby boy."

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"God bless mother and baby," I said.

"Amen," murmured Alice, "and, Father, mama wants to get out of the hospital."

"But why, Alice? The Sisters of the Good Samaritan, as I happen to know, are kindness itself to her: she couldn't get better treatment anywhere."

"Yes, Father, she says so herself. But, you see, papa needs her. She thinks if she's home she can get him to stop drinking. He's not so very bad you know, but I guess he needs mama more than us children."

"Ah! I didn't think of that."

After consulting with the Daltons and assuring ourselves that Mrs. Morrow was out of danger, the good woman was three days later brought back to her neglected home. On her arrival she found out from her gradually sobering husband that he had, while in his cups, gambled every cent of their savings' account. There was no further talk of moving from squalor to a tidy little home on Pioneer Street. The good ship "Hardly-Ever," Captain Romance, had sprung a very disastrous leak.

It was then, by reason of this unlooked-for impoverishment, that Miss Margaret again came to the rescue. There is in Cincinnati a Catholic organization of ladies called the "Visitation and Aid Society," of which she was a member. She telephoned an account of the case to the President of that thriving body, Miss Keller, who at once took the matter up with an energy which advancing years had not diminished. A trained nurse was sent to the home, packages containing all the linens and

medicines suited to the circumstances were brought in, and Miss Keller herself, a retired school-teacher, who now gave all her time to charity, came upon the scene, and, in language that was very much to the point, told Mr. Morrow what she thought of him. To such effect did she speak that the father was really frightened, and remained a total abstainer for several months.

This year proved to be the most momentous in the history of St. Xavier School: it was the year made illustrious by Pius X's regulations concerning the First Holy Communion of children. All the little ones from seven years and upwards—even the tiny toddlers of six whose mental development was above the average—were to be suffered and no longer forbidden to come to Him whose standard of sanctity is the little child. Previously to this year, only those who were full thirteen were allowed to enter the Communion class. There were many of this age still held from Communion, and looking over the school records I found that there were to be six hundred children to be prepared.

Fortunately, there was a large hall in the fourth floor of the school, and thither on a certain morning in January repaired this army of little children. The Sisters and Brothers ushered them up, and when I arrived on the scene I found myself facing an array of boys and girls varying in age from six to fourteen years. After a prayer, I motioned them, and down on the floor, clean and polished, sat the six hundred. It was a pretty sight. All were intensely in earnest, especially the little children

of seven and eight. I was to learn during this daily half hour of instruction, which went on for some five months, that *little* children were quicker to take in supernatural truths than boys and girls of thirteen. The white robe of Baptism was less spotted; the world, the flesh, and the devil had not as yet got their unhallowed hands upon their tender souls, and, in consequence, as I believe, they took in the great truths of faith with an ease and simplicity not to be expected naturally from minds so immature.

During all these days the attention of the smaller children was perfect. Once in a while it was necessary for me to say a word of warning to an overgrown boy or a silly self-conscious girl; but the little ones were perfect. The class of six hundred was so quiet that one outside the hall would find it difficult to imagine that it was filled. The doing away with chairs proved, of course, to be a great help; it was impossible for the fidgety boy or nervous girl to kick an irresponsible leg against the chair rungs.

It was an inspiring class. All were in dead earnest save two or three sophisticated boys, and as many no less sophisticated girls. The former had run the streets and contracted the taste—or rather the want of it—which comes of cheap vaudeville; the latter had been led to conceive an exaggerated opinion of their charms, and spent much of their time in wondering what the different “fellows” they met—and “fellows” only do such girls ever meet—thought of them. This pitiful half dozen

should have been caught earlier. They would have made better candidates for Extreme Unction than for Confirmation. Thanks to Pius X, the Children's Pope, the Pope of the Blessed Sacrament, their day is done.

Of all the Communicants, however, there was one who stood out prominently as leader, and that one was Alice Morrow.

Alice lost no word I uttered; she seemed to get the idea at once. Any question proposed would find her, when all else were puzzled, ready to make answer. There is no branch taught the children of our schools which serves better, while training the heart, to develop the intellect, than Christian Doctrine. One may—supposing it to be properly taught—teach Arithmetic, and yet fail to discover the mental grasp of many a student. The same may be said of the teaching of Grammar. The former branch does not appeal to a large percentage of otherwise bright students; the latter, owing to its dryness and formality, may fail to engage the interest of many a boy and girl. But Christian Doctrine, properly taught, while a thing of absorbing interest, appeals both to reason and imagination. Logic, poetry, exactness come in for their share; and any teacher who knows how to be interesting will discover very early in his vocation that he can best gauge the intellectual gifts of his pupils in hearing them ask and answer questions during the time devoted to the study of this most important branch. Other things being equal, the child who studies Christian Doctrine is far better equipped for the business of life than the boy

or girl who has been trained in the secular branches alone.

There is no rose without its thorns, however, and my rose had many. Every morning from nine to eleven I was occupied in receiving visits from puzzled and more or less indignant parents.

"My little girl is too young," one would explain: "she's only ten; and I made my Communion when I was thirteen."

"Oh—have you been going to Mass every Sunday this year?"

"Oh, yes."

"And is it possible that you haven't heard the pastor say anything about the new legislation made by the Pope himself as to the age of children going to Communion?"

"I—I—don't think so."

"Then read this, please"—and I would hand the inquirer the printed document on the subject—"and when you've read it carefully and understand what it is about, come back and we'll talk it over intelligently. Good morning; be sure to come back."

She didn't, and "she" stands for that class of Catholics who get their religious information from the daily paper.

But there were some who had more serious difficulties, and among these were Mr. and Mrs. Morrow.

The class had not gone quite three weeks, when Alice Morrow called on me. She had grown into a tall, slim, graceful girl and was within a few weeks of fourteen. Her oval face

was a trifle thinner, but lighted with those contrasting beauties, innocence and intelligence.

"Father, I'm really sorry to trouble you, but mama and papa have asked me so often to come to you about it that I really must."

"About what, Alice?"

"About us children making our First Communion. You see there are four of us in the class; myself, Elsie, Frank, and Margaret—and she's only six. That means one dollar for each of us to pay for our veils, scapulars, Communion cards, and Frank's sash. Then there's to be the four of us dressed for the great day. That means four pairs of shoes, new clothes, and Communion prayer-books and beads, too. My uncle is going to fit me out, and Miss Margaret Dalton is going to take care of Elsie, but papa and mama would like you to wait another year for Frank and Margaret."

"I'll take care of Frank," I said. "At least," I added, "I have a friend down town who will be glad to do it."

"Thank you, Father. I'm so ashamed that we're not able to take care of ourselves; but since that little baby boy came, papa's been out of work most the time, and there's scarcely any work now; you know there's a panic and my papa says plastering's as dead as a doornail. He doesn't see much work coming until May at the earliest. How about little Margaret? She's only six."

"Well, we can let her wait for another year."

"Thank you, Father, my parents will be so glad." She paused a moment, then added: "But Margaret won't."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, Father, she's the most enthusiastic little girl you ever saw about First Communion; she's talking about it more than any of us. Every day she makes me go over what you say at our instructions, and she asks the wisest questions, and you ought to see her pray; she's got a little picture of the infant Jesus fixed in a sort of a little shrine, and she kneels before it every night with her hands clasped and she stays on her knees till we bundle her into bed. Papa says she's a saint."

I had noticed in Communion class little Margaret, the tiniest, the most fragile child of the six hundred. Her earnest eyes followed my every motion, and her enthusiasm was striking. In answering the prayers her lisping voice rang out clear, sweet, redolent of such living faith as is found in saints and in little children.

"By all means, Alice, we must first see Margaret about this before taking any action."

Alice left me and presently returned with her youngest sister.

"Good morning, Margaret."

"Good morning, Father."

"I hear you are in the Communion class."

"Yeth, Father."

"How old are you?"

"Thix."

"Thix. That's rather young. When were you thix?"

"On the twenty-thecond of Dethember."

Margaret was standing before me, her shoulders squared, her head erect, and her hands

clasped behind her back. She bore a remarkable resemblance to the Fairy of the Snows as I had first seen her, only Margaret's oval face was paler, thinner, her body slighter, and her hair decidedly more golden.

"Why, you're only six a few months, child; you're too young to make your First Communion."

Margaret's face changed, the smile left it, and grave inquiry took its place. She looked at me for some moments, a quiver passed over her countenance, and then big silent tears began coursing down her pale cheeks.

"Don't cry, sweetheart," said Alice.

But Margaret did cry, and as she burst into sobs she caught my hand with both of hers and held on as though she were drowning. As for myself, I felt like a pickpocket caught in the act.

"Say, Margaret," I presently said, "do you really want to make your First Communion?"

"I do, I do. Oh, yeth, I do. O-o-o-o-oh!"

"Do you know your prayers?"

Margaret gulped once, gulped again, and then throwing back her shoulders, raising her head, dropping her grasp on me, and putting her hands behind her back, she said:

"I know the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Ax of Faith, Hope, Love, and Contrition."

"She does," corroborated Alice. "She knows 'em as well as I do. Only there's a word here and there she can't pronounce."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in."

"Excuse me, Father," said a young lady.

pushing open the door. "I'm Miss Quinlan of Walnut Hills. You don't know me."

"I have heard of you, Miss Quinlan," which was certainly true. Miss Quinlan bore the reputation, not altogether unmerited, of running with a set which in the matter of morals and decency just kept within the speed limit. In other words, she was a very worldly young woman.

"I understand, Father, that you have a tremendous Communion class, this year, and that you have in the class a great number of very poor boys and girls."

"That is precisely the situation, Miss Quinlan."

"Well, I'm not much of a Catholic, Father, not what I ought to be, but I just now happened to be passing the school, and it occurred to me that I might dress some little girl for Holy Communion."

"Was it your angel that whispered you the suggestion, or the angel of that little child there?" and I pointed to Margaret, upon whose face still lingered two belated tears.

"It must have been her angel: I fear mine has long joined the band of heavenly Othellos whose occupation is gone. But, Father, you don't mean to say that that little bit of a thing—she looks like an angel herself—is going to make her First Communion!"

"The fact is," I answered, "that I thought she wasn't a minute ago: but I'm beginning to think again. When I suggested that she wait another year, Margaret at once became a Niobe, all tears. When you just now announced

your willingness to dress one little girl, I thought that the angels—particularly Margaret's angel—were taking a hand in the affair. Miss Quinlan, you will be good enough to dress Margaret Morrow, age thix, for First Communion, seeing also that she be provided with beads and prayer-book."

"Gladly, Father. Who knows but she will turn out to be my little angel?"

Ah, who knows? There were, I felt afterwards, angels in that room, angels who, entertained by us unawares, had not a little to do with the shaping of our words and of our actions.

Nudged by the attentive Alice, who took in every word of the conversation, Margaret came over with extended hand to Miss Quinlan.

"Thank you, mith."

Miss Quinlan took more than the extended hand: she caught the child up in her arms, and there before me innocence and worldliness embraced.

When Miss Quinlan, her face a little flushed and her eyes blinking, put the child down again, she turned to me and in a tone which had lost all the conventional air of persiflage said:

"Here, Father," handing me an envelope. "Use it for charity, and I'm coming to see you again. Pray for me."

"So, Margaret," I said presently, "you may make your First Communion. It's been settled in a higher court than mine."

Margaret looked like an angel a few minutes before. She danced out of the room now—do angels dance?—and the Fairy of the Snows was dancing with her.

CHAPTER XI

A LITTLE FLOWER OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

THE Communion class had been going on for full five weeks, when, on coming up to the hall as usual, I missed Margaret Morrow. It was absolutely impossible not to miss the little child, who, in the front row, led all the mites of six and seven in answering the short prayers at the beginning of the class; impossible not to miss the little girl whose attention so caught me that often, while instructing the whole class, I discovered myself unconsciously addressing myself to her. Somehow that morning the time dragged; the class of six hundred, because of the absence of one little child—of course, there were others absent, too—seemed to have lost its savor.

Alice was awaiting me at my office when I came downstairs.

"Father," she said, "Margaret was taken sick yesterday afternoon, and last night she had a high fever. She was talking of nothing all during the night but of Holy Communion, and of you, Father. She wants to see you so. She made me promise to ask you to come and see her."

"Is she better to-day?"

"Mama thought she would be; but she was very weak this morning. When mama asked her whether she wanted breakfast this morning, she said that she wanted Father Carney."

"Tell Margaret, my dear, that I'll be down this afternoon the first chance I get."

Accordingly at five o'clock I entered the Morrow tenement. All the family, save Margaret, were gathered about the kitchen stove, the school children busy with their books and slates, Mrs. Morrow plying, as usual, the untiring needle, and the head of the family dandling the baby boy in his arms. They jumped up on my arrival, and all at once in various language expressed a hearty welcome.

"Margaret will be so glad," said Alice, squeezing up to me. "She's been asking every five minutes almost whether Father Carney was coming."

"How is she?"

"Nothing seems to be the matter with her," answered Mrs. Morrow, "except that she is so very weak. This morning, after the other children had gone to school, she begged me to let her get up; but, of course, I kept her in bed. Then she asked whether she couldn't get up at one o'clock, so that she could go to the Communion class. I told her to wait and I would see about it. Between nine and ten o'clock I went downstairs to get some groceries, and my husband came along with me. We were gone only a few minutes; but when I came back I found Margaret holding one stocking in her hand, and lying on the floor. She had attempted to get up and dress. She wasn't unconscious either, but she was so weak that she fell over, and couldn't get up."

"And, Father," supplemented Alice, "when mama said 'Margaret, why didn't you stay in

bed?' she answered, 'I don't want to miss Communion class.' And when mama told her she'd have to stay at home, she turned her face to the wall, and said not a word. But mama could see that she was crying."

"Gee," said Francis, now grown into a sturdy boy of eight or nine, "I wish I was as anxious to make my First Communion as Margaret is."

"Have you had a doctor for Margaret, Mrs. Morrow?"

"No, Father: do you think it necessary? My children have all been so healthy that I've never thought of getting a doctor."

"If you have no objections, I'll have Dr. Kelly call to-night, or to-morrow morning."

"Thank you, Father; I'd have sent for one myself, but—but——"

"I understand, Mrs. Morrow: but don't worry about the expense. Dr. Kelly will charge it to me. And now let me see Margaret."

The mother and I went into the adjoining room together. Margaret was evidently awaiting me. She was supported in a half reclining position on two pillows.

"Oh, Father!" she said, and caught my hand, "I am tho glad to thee you."

"Well, Margaret, my little dear, how do you feel?"

"All right; only I have a pain here," she said, putting her hand on her night-dress a little below the neck. "But it ithn't much. Father: are you going to put me out of the clath?"

"Why, Margaret?"

"Coth I mithed to-day?"

"Margaret, you may miss a week, if you like; and I promise not to put you out. You know that to-day a week all the little children of the first, second, and third grade are going to make their First Communion privately."

"And may I make it with them, Father, even if I'm thick?"

"Yes, my dear; every day, if you keep on missing, Alice will explain the lesson, and Alice knows the catechism better than any one of the six hundred. Is there anything else you want, Margaret?"

"Yeth, Father! I want to go to Confession?"

The mother retired, and the pale, beautiful, waxen-faced child told her little tale in perfect innocence, simplicity, and love. At the end, I gave her a special blessing, and expressed the hope that she would be with us on the morrow.

But the hope was not realized. Dr. Kelly called at my office next morning, just as I was making ready to go up to the hall.

"Father, that little girl Margaret Morrow is, I fear, a very sick girl indeed."

"You don't say, Doctor?"

"I certainly do. Her heart is weak—very weak. Unless matters take a turn for the better in three or four days, I don't see how I can pull her through. I suppose you're rather surprised to see me coming in, when I could get you on the 'phone?"

"You read my thoughts, Doctor."

"Well, the fact is little Margaret insisted on my coming to see you personally before eleven o'clock this morning. She doesn't care a snap

of her pretty little finger what I think of her case; but she cares everything as to what you think. She wants to make her Communion with the little ones of her grade next Monday. That would mean a miracle."

"Very well, then," I said; "we'll have the miracle."

"Just as you say, Father," said the doctor with his dry, wise smile. "But one thing is certain; you're not going to get her out of her snowy cot—it is snowy, by George, if it is in a tenement—till I say so."

"Who's running this thing?"

"I am," said Dr. Kelly.

"How much per visit?"

"Five hundred per, with the usual discount to the clergy."

I charged David, my present office-boy, the successor of Michael, who had left me for a fine position, to call up Miss Quinlan and the Misses Margaret and Teresa Dalton, and let them know at once that Margaret Morrow was very ill.

As the week went on there came no improvement to the sick child. She grew quieter, said little, and lay in her snowy cot—a gift from Teresa Dalton—so arranged that her eyes could fall, when she listed, upon her favorite picture. She showed no anxiety to get well, except in so far as it would enable her to go to Holy Communion on the coming Monday.

On Saturday the doctor called me up.

"I'm sorry to say, Father, that your sweet, charming, and patient little friend is not long

for this world. There's no cure for a heart like hers."

I at once telephoned Miss Quinlan and the Daltons.

On Sunday afternoon I was again with my little invalid. No flower was ever fairer than her face—illness had made it sweeter, and added to it an other-worldliness, the beauty of which, in the face of death, is born of childlike faith and innocence. The room, as usual, spotless, was bright and gay with lilies, and fragrant with violets. Margaret and Teresa Dalton and Miss Quinlan were present: I could easily account for the flowers.

"Father," said Alice speaking, as I could see, in the name of the whole family and of the three visitors, "Margaret has become so worried to-day. The doctor told her at last that she positively could not get up for Monday."

"And I told the doctor the other day when he said that it would take a miracle to get her ready for Communion with the others that, if it were necessary, we would have a miracle."

"Oh, Father," cried Alice, "are you going to work a miracle?"

"No, my dear. But what greater miracle is there in the world than for Our Lord to come to the homes of sick little boys and girls, when they can't come to Him? Margaret, my dear, how would you like Our Lord to come to you to-morrow morning?"

Margaret sat up in bed.

"Oh, so much!" Out went the two hands, fluttering like white doves, in a sweeping, far-flung gesture, and with it the frail body sank back upon the cot.

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"Would you like me to examine you, my dear? You know, all the little ones of your class have been examined already, and all have passed. I believe there are none in the first grade who know their matter better than you; so you needn't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid," said Margaret, making an endeavor to sit up—and failing.

"Lie just as you are, Margaret. Now, when you go to Communion, what do you receive?"

"The body and blood of Our Lord under the form and looks of bread."

"And when you receive, what does the thing you receive look like?"

"Bread."

"What does it taste like?"

"Bread."

"Then it is bread."

"No, it ithn't," and Margaret shook her head with vigor.

"How do you know it isn't bread?"

"By faith; Our Lord told uth."

"And do you believe it firmly?"

Margaret nodded her head with still greater vigor.

"May you eat anything before Communion?"

"Not from twelve o'clock at night, unlth you are very, very thick."

"And are you very, very sick?"

"I don't know. I want to be a Thithter or die?"

"Well, Margaret, to-morrow, at nine o'clock, I am coming here with Our Lord; and you needn't fast."

"I want to fatht," she said decidedly.

"You do as mama tells you. And, Margaret, when people are very sick, what does the priest do?"

"He anoints them with oil—Ecthreme Unc-tion."

"Then, I am going to anoint you, so that, if it's God's will, you may get well."

"Thank you, Father. Am I going to have my Communion dress?"

"You certainly are, my pet," put in Miss Quinlan. "And, Father, if you have no objection, Margaret and Teresa Dalton and myself will be here."

"Nothing would please me better."

The three young ladies were near to tears.

Next morning, when I entered the room, hal-lowed by the innocent invalid, I noticed in a glance the loving care of loving hands on every side. There were flowers in profusion. The table was covered with a snow-white cloth, and everything upon it, from crucifix to silver spoon, was immaculate. Poverty, hand in hand with cleanliness, has a beauty all its own.

Upon the cot lay Margaret, in the white splendor of her Communion dress. Should an angel be called upon to assume a human vesture, he need have gone no further than the room in this poor tenement. Love, devotion, faith, gave the fair face the beauty that is beyond the gift or power of this earth. Miss Quinlan's whis-pered "She is an angel," seemed to have a literal meaning.

Supported by Alice on one side, and Miss Quinlan on the other, Margaret received Him who still calls out—"Suffer little children to

come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Slowly she was allowed to sink back upon her pillow, where, with closed eyes, she remained perfectly still. Only for a slight movement of the lips one would have thought her dead.

We tiptoed out of the room; a great reverence had come upon us all; and for several minutes we spoke in whispers. So low were our tones, that a faint voice within calling, "Father," caused me to start.

"Well, Margaret," I said in answer to her call.

"Father, may I—may I go often?"

"My child, if you like, you may receive Our Lord every day."

A wave of beauty, the beauty that is not of the earth, swept over the face.

"Now, Father, I am going to pray for you."

"By the way," I observed to Miss Quinlan, as we picked our way down the sagging steps, "I have now given four Sacraments to Margaret Morrow."

"Four, Father?"

"Yes; I heard her confession, anointed her, and gave her Holy Communion. And then, you ought to know, I baptized her."

"Why, Father, I understood that the Morrows have only been three or four years in this city."

"Yes; but at the time Margaret was born, Mr. Morrow had some sort of a fuss with the parish priest, who had scolded him for his drinking habits. As a result he wouldn't have Margaret, when she was a baby, brought to the bap-

tismal font, and so her Baptism went by default. Miss Margaret Dalton here found out the circumstances, and brought both Margaret and Francis to me. She was baptized along with Francis two years ago, when she was four years of age."

"Margaret," observed Miss Quinlan, "while I've been wasting my time you've been doing good. I've heard of how you and Teresa have brought ever so many poor people back to the practice of their religion. I wish I had done more. Oh, Father Carney, I've got a guardian angel again!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes; but it's a different one. Margaret Morrow is mine. The little darling is praying for me; and actually I can feel it effecting me. Miss Margaret, any time you want a companion in your work, call on me."

And so every morning I brought the Sacred Host into the tenement; and every morning the red-faced woman, whom Michael had so graphically described, was out on the landing to inquire how the "little angel" was doing. Even she was touched into something finer for the presence of the dying child.

On the eighth day I could not but observe that Margaret was perceptibly weaker. Before giving her Holy Communion I heard her confession, at the end of which I asked:

"How are you feeling, Margaret?"

"I've a pain here," she answered, putting her hand over her heart. "I've had it all night."

"Do you want the pain to go away?"

"I want Holy Communion."

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"And, Margaret, my dear, if Our Lord wants to take you away, are you willing to go?"

"Oh, yeth, Father!"

"Then tell Our Lord that you are willing to give up your life, if He wants you to."

There was a short pause; Margaret's lips were moving feebly; then she said in a voice grown perceptibly weaker,

"I have told Him." The child looked up at me as she said these words, and smiled.

After her Communion, while the family knelt about her, I assisted her in her thanksgiving.

"Alice," I said to my faithful companion down the stairway, "I think that Margaret is very near to Heaven. She must know it herself; for just now, as I was going, she took my hand and said, 'Good-bye, Father; I have told Him.' Now, if any change takes place, tell mama to send for me at once."

"All right, Father; oh, how I wish I was in Margaret's place."

Slowly I went my way over to Sycamore, slowly up the hill from Third to Fourth St., and paused. It seemed to me that in a sense I was walking with God; that angels, the angels of the Blessed Eucharist, the angels of little children, were accompanying me. Slowly, almost reluctantly, I resumed my way.

Suddenly, out of the hurly-burly of the great city, my ear picked out light footsteps coming rapidly behind me; I turned, and I was not at all surprised to discover Alice. She had, I surmised, run all the way from her home, run in that light, graceful manner I had observed in her so many a time before.

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"Father," she said, "she has taken the turn. Mama says she is in her agony. She called for you three times."

Had I heard that call? Why had my steps become slower and slower? Why had I even paused, and waited? Why had I listened for those footfalls, and caught them out of all the noises of a great city?

We hastened back. Margaret was gasping, and breathing laboriously. I took her hand.

"Margaret," I called three, several times, with pauses between. Those gentle lips were never to answer more.

"Let us say the prayers for a departing soul," I said to the assembled family, and forthwith I began the Litany for the Dying. With every invocation the breathing became quieter, less labored. At the end of the litany I paused and bent over the unconscious child; she was still breathing; and I went on reading the prayer which follows the litany.

"Let Us Pray.

"Depart, O Christian soul, out of this sinful world, in the name of God, the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered and died for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee; in the name of the Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Cherubim and Seraphim——"

I paused, and bent down; the gentle breathing had not ceased.

"In the name of the Patriarchs and Prophets, of the Holy Apostles and Evangelists, of the

Holy Martyrs and Confessors, of the Holy Monks and Hermits, of the Holy Virgins and of all the Saints of God; let peace come to thee this day——”

A tiny sigh, as of one sinking to grateful rest, brought me to a pause. Margaret Morrow had breathed her last. Then I finished:

“And let thy abode be in Holy Sion: through Christ our Lord, Amen.”

And there in that lowly room, with father, mother, brother, and sisters weeping silently, I was filled with the sense of invisible presences. It was not a place of death, but of glory. The Heaven that hung about Margaret Morrow in her infancy had reached her again, and of it, for the moment, we were all partakers.

And so the girl whom I had two years before baptized; whom I, in the name of the Church, had adjured, saying, “Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry without stain before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have life everlasting,” whom I had further adjured, saying, “Receive this burning light, and keep thy Baptism so as to be without blame; observe the Commandments of God, that when Our Lord shall come to His nuptials, thou mayest meet Him together with all the Saints in the heavenly court, and mayest have eternal life, and live forever and forever;” this little girl, having, at the bidding of the Church, preserved her white garment unstained, and kept her baptism without blame, at the same bidding departed out of this sinful world into peace and into her abode in holy Sion.

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There is, I fancy, a chosen band in Heaven, so like the Holy Innocents, first flowers of Christ's coming, yet so different. Margaret Morrow was one of the first; their number has grown into the thousands. This beauteous band, which follows the Lamb whithersoever He goes, is made up of the dear little children, who, thanks to the great and glorious Pontiff, Pius X, called early to Communion, have been early changed into other Christs, and brought early to Heaven—the Holy Innocents of the Blessed Eucharist.

CHAPTER XII

INTRODUCING DAVID REILLY, AND SHOWING HOW HE LED A DOUBLE LIFE

MY NEW office boy, David Reilly, just turned fourteen, led a double life. It took me some time to find it out; but he did. Like all the office boys of St. Xavier's before him he was a widow's son. He had a somewhat dark and slightly freckled face—a Celtic one at that—large eyes, and an air of solemnity which often led me to think that he would, in time, qualify as an exceptional undertaker. For the first two weeks in my office I never knew him to smile. Under his dark, curly hair, rising up into a natural and striking pompadour, he wore an expression for which vacancy is a word sadly inadequate.

He began his service of two years with me in the vacation month of August. I had chosen him because his mother, being a widow, needed his help, because he struck me as being thoroughly honest, and because, while he helped me in the office work, I intended giving him a chance to pursue his studies.

I tried to discover in every way his sense—if any—of humor. From day to day, I would ply him with such questions as follow. Many of his answers I jotted down in my diary.

"David, how would like to be a pirate?"

David raised his eyes from a copy of one of Alger's books, and made answer:

"Father, I don't think I'd care to."

"Why not?"

"It's wrong: ain't it?"

"David, which would you rather be—a murderer or a bank-robber?"

"Father, I think I'd rather be a bank-robber."

"Why?"

"Father, I don't think I'd like to kill people."

"You'd rather crack safes?"

"Father, I wouldn't like that either. Father, I don't think I'd like to be a bank-robber."

Gradually it came to this, that whenever I was tired or annoyed, I would come out of my office and ask David the most idiotic question I could think of, to which he invariably returned the most serious reply I could imagine. In this single detail of answering outrageous questions, David fairly earned his salary.

David, also, was as slow as he was solemn. If I sent him to the post-office for stamps, he would return in some twenty-five minutes, though the building was just two blocks distant.

"David," I said one day, "you don't happen to have a valise, do you?"

"No, Father."

"You never did have a valise?"

"Father, I think not. But I think I know a boy who has one. Do you want to borrow it?"

"No, David; but I'm going to send you on an errand up Reading Road. The place is two miles from here, and I thought if you had a

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valise you might bring along some food and a change of linen."

"Father," said David, "I think I can borrow Pat Noonan's valise."

"Oh, very well. We'll see about that when I've written the letter I want you to take."

I was signing my name to that particular letter when David came in modestly.

"Father, how far did you say it was?"

"Two miles or so."

"Father, I think I can go there and come back without needing food and a change of linen."

"If you fall by the wayside, David, call me up on the 'phone, and I'll send you an ambulance."

"Thank you, Father, I will."

Finally, David did show that he was human. I asked him one day whether he would like to go to the altar-boys' picnic.

"Oh, yes, Father, I would." And David *smiled*. For three weeks I had asked ridiculous questions, and told funny stories, only to gaze upon a face which might have been a graven image. A simple invitation to a picnic had effected what I had thought to be the impossible. During that day I caught David three different times red-handed in the act of smiling. He always checked himself on catching my eye, and became against all seeming possibility more funereal in expression than ever.

Jerry took great interest in David. For instance, when David was one day entering the school-yard on his way to my office with a check for ten dollars, Jerry waylaid him.

"What's that you've got, David?"

"A man gave it to me for Father Carney."

"What is it?"

"I don't know, Jerry."

"Why, you spalpeen, can't you see it is a check?"

"Oh, is it?"

"Did you think it was a lightning rod? You omadhaun, can't you read? Why, boy, it's a check for ten dollars on the Brighton Bank."

"Oh, is it?"

"Can't you say anything else but 'Oh, is it?' you spindle-legged poll-parrot? Yes: and what would the Father be wanting with a check: he wants the money. Did you go to the bank, and have it cashed? It's for ten dollars."

"Father Carney never told me."

"Oh, wirra, wirra! Are there any idiots in your family beside yourself? The trouble with you, David, is that you never do anything unless you're told to do it. You're a bump on a log. When Michael was here, he used to think things out for himself, and that's the reason Father Carney thought so much of him, and got him a fine position in a railroad office. If you keep on the way you're doing, Father Carney will end by sending you to the Morgue."

"The Brighton Bank is pretty far away, isn't it?"

"It's in the West End—a mile and a half or so. You'll be surprised when you come back with the money and see Father Carney's face."

When, two hours later, Master David, foot-sore and spent, dragged himself into my office *without* the money, he was surprised not only

at the look on my face but also with some of the comments I made on his business sense. As for Jerry, that distinguished janitor kept sedulously out of my way for the ensuing four or five days. To him am I indebted for the foregoing details.

It was in the third week of Master David's engagement with me that I noticed a change, slight, it is true, but striking in his demeanour. On entering my office one morning David jumped up, bowed, and said:

"Good morning, Father." And when I was leaving in the afternoon, he arose as before, bowed again, and said: "Good afternoon, Father." Up to this time, David, unless spoken to, had never spoken. These salutations continued without variation for six or seven days. Then David visited me with another surprise.

As I entered on this particular morning, he arose, bowed, and made his customary speech; then he took in a full breath, gulped, breathed hard, and said:

"I hope, Father, you—you—had—you enjoyed—a pleasant—sleep last night."

My suspicions were confirmed.

"I did, David, thank you. And now, my boy, will you be good enough to tell me who has been coaching you to bow and say 'Good morning'?"

"Father, it was Alice Morrow."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; she and my sister Mary are in the same class, and Alice comes over to see her, and she gives me pointers."

"Did she tell you to express the hope I had a good night's rest?"

"Yes, Father; she's been teaching me that for a week; and I tried to say it several times, but I just couldn't. I don't think, Father, I got it quite right, but I'll do better to-morrow."

"Well, David, I'll tell you what; you needn't ask me how I have slept, because I generally sleep well anyhow. But if you ever see me coming in with blood in my eye, and a black frown on my brow, and my fists doubled up ready to punch you, there'll be no need to ask the question; for that's a sure sign I've not slept well."

There was a pause: David looked completely lost.

"Well, David, why don't you say something?"

"Father, do you ever have blood in your eye?"

"Wait and see. Anything else?"

"And, Father, is Alice Morrow stringing me?"

"I really don't know, David."

"If she is, I'll fix her," said David.

It was on this very day, if my memory serves me right, that the Honorable Andrew Monahan, King and Councilman of the Eighth Ward, called me on the telephone.

"Say, Father, some one in your school has forged my name to a letter."

"What! Are you sure?"

"It looks pretty sure. The letter-head reads 'St. Xavier School,' and the envelope is a school envelope, too. Could you find out who did it?"

It put me into quite an embarrassing position. I'll send you the letter at once."

"Very well, Mr. Monahan. I'll be glad to trace the matter up."

Ten minutes later Mr. Daniel Corbett, the councilman's factotum, appeared with the mysterious document.

"Read that, Father," he said.

Sure enough the paper and envelope came from the school office. The letter ran as follows:

Mr. Pat Noonan.

DEAR SIR: I have heard that you had a good baseball team on the Fifth Street hill last summer, and that you are going to start the same team again this spring. It would give me pleasure to fit you and the other team-mates of your club, all of my ward, with baseball uniforms. Call with your players at my house any night when I am home.

"Yours truly,

"ANDREW MONAHAN."

The whole letter, including the signature, was typewritten.

"Now what do you think of that?" ejaculated Mr. Corbett. "Last night a delegation of thirteen boys were ushered into Mr. Monahan's sitting-room, where three or four of us were playing pinochle. They were all smiles.

"Well, boys?" said the Councilman.

"Mr. Monahan," said one little Irishman, 'I'm Pat Noonan.'

"Oh, you are. I'm glad to know you, Pat. Well, what's up?"

"Pat grew uneasy.

" 'I came about that letter, sir.'

" 'What letter?'

" 'Oh, you know; you've wrote to me about it. Our ball club.'

" 'Got that letter with you?—Oh, you have. Let's see it.'

"Then Mr. Monahan read it, and said:

" 'Boys, some one's put up a joke on you.'

"The ball team, ceasing to smile, began to look with unfavorable eyes on their spokesman.

" 'Didn't you write it, sir?' asked Pat.

" 'I certainly did not.'

" 'Oh,' ejaculated Pat. 'Good-bye, sir.'

"It was fun to see how quickly Pat slipped through that crowd, and made for the door. The next thing you know, without bow or word, the entire team was hot on the heels of their captain. He had a start of fifty or sixty feet on them, and I hope he got home safe."

"Evidently," I said, "some mischievous boy managed to get hold of our paper and envelopes. I know that it wasn't my office boy, because he's incapable of a joke. However, I'll inquire of him; he may know something. What I learn I will send you word."

Accordingly, when David returned from an errand to the office, I said:

"David, did you let any boy have the use of our typewriter to write a letter?"

"No, Father; I did not."

"Did you let any boy have a sheet of our office paper and an office envelope?"

"No, Father; I did not."

"David, I'm puzzled. Somebody's got in

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here, and, I think, has used your typewriter for a letter."

"Maybe it was Jerry."

"No; Jerry wouldn't do it. Do you see this letter?" and I opened the sheet for David's inspection. The boy grew very pale, and then very red.

"David," I said sternly, "what do you know?"

"Father, I—I—wrote that letter."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed and fell into a chair.

"It was only a joke, Father."

"Do you ever joke, David?"

"Not very often, Father."

"David, my boy, you're leading a double life."

"What's that, Father?"

Ignoring his question, I proceeded to give David a little talk on the ethics of our school-office and the danger of signing other people's names, to all of which the boy simply said:

"Father, I won't do it again."

It was my custom to dismiss David every afternoon about four o'clock, a dismissal welcomed generally with noticeable alacrity on his part in getting away. On this particular afternoon, however, David, in reply to my "You can go now," said:

"Father, if you please, I'd just as soon stay and read."

Was the boy taking a literary turn?

"David, how would you like to be a poet?"

"I don't think I would like it very much, Father."

"Why not?"

"Because I want to be a fireman. Do you want me to be a poet, Father?"

The next afternoon's dismissal, and the next, met with the same extraordinary request.

"Look here, boy," I said on the third occasion, "what's the reason you've so suddenly come to love sticking in this office?"

"Father, they're waiting for me."

"Who are waiting for you?"

"Pat Noonan and the rest of the team."

"What's the matter with them?"

"Father, I don't think they liked that letter I wrote very much."

"Oh, you don't?"

"No, Father."

"What are they waiting for you for?"

"I don't know, Father."

"Why don't you find out?"

"Please, Father, I'd rather not."

I watched David depart that afternoon. Instead of going down to Fifth and then eastward to his home—a walk of five or six minutes—he went up to Court Street, then, as I afterwards ascertained, up to Mt. Adams, and down that famous hill of art to his proper domicile.

This state of siege lasted for nearly a week; and came to an end in a way entirely unexpected.

David, all alone, was in the last half-hour of his self-imposed vigil, and was figuring out what new route he should take for his home—he never, it seemed, took the same one—when a man entered the office and asked to see the

janitor. David invited him to sit down and wait while he went in search of Jerry.

Leaving the office, and reaching the stairway leading down to the engine-room, it suddenly occurred to the boy to go back and see what the man was doing.

"You see," David explained to me later, "the man looked queer."

Back therefore David hurried: there was no one in the outer office. Either the man had gone out, or he had slipped into my private office. David tiptoed forward and peeped through the keyhole. My desk was on a line with the door, and David saw the man with some instrument trying to pry it open. David straightened up and took thought. He looked around him. A long pole, a window-opener, caught his eye. He brought it over to the closed door. There was a hand-bell used for various purposes: this, too, handling gingerly, he placed within easy reach of the pole. Then hurrying over to the music-room, he got a fire-extinguisher, and placed that next the other articles. Quietly raising the window just outside the door of my office, David reached out with the bell and gave three quick, vigorous swings, letting it with the last swing fall into the yard. As one hand dropped the bell, the other was reaching for the fire-extinguisher. It was too heavy to handle with one hand, and David, as he threw open the door, dropped it. The fire-extinguisher—lying on the floor like some dismantled cannon—gave forth, for David had upset it, a hideous sound and a powdery stream. David took no time to study the conduct of

the fire-extinguisher; for he had now got his third weapon, the pole, in his two hands. The burglar, frightened by the noise of the bell, was still more frightened, as the door was thrown open, by the mysterious gurgling explosive, designed, it might be, to blow him up. He had thrown open the farther window in the office on hearing the bell; he now jumped upon the sill at the sight of the fire-extinguisher. At him dashed the heroic Dave, yelling at the top of his voice: "Police—Police—Thieves!" at the same time prodding with such effect that out of the window went the man a little sooner than he intended. He landed eight feet below on hands and knees, instead of on his feet, to find on arising that he was surrounded by a crowd, brought partly by the bell, partly by the spectacle he had afforded the passers-by in dropping out of the window, partly by the vigorous yells of the dauntless youth.

"Hold him," screamed David. "He's a thief!"

The usual indecision of a crowd showed itself; and the man, had he not been dazed, might easily have effected his escape. Just then, Jerry, who had heard the bell, came rushing through the crowd carrying a pot of green paint.

"Where's the thief?" he cried.

"There," cried a dozen willing voices. Whereupon Jerry promptly threw the paint into the man's face, and, dropping the empty can, seized the green criminal. With men like Jerry and boys like David to deal with, the life of a thief would be full of unimagined surprises.

David's picture was in the *Commercial Tribune* the next morning with the inscription, "David Reilly, the boy-hero. Single-handed he captures a notorious thief."

David smiled several times that morning. One of these times was when he said to me:

"Father, I think I can go home regularly now."

"Oh, have you and Pat made up?"

"The fellers have thrown him down. They elected me Captain this morning, and they're not laying for me any more."

"And how about Pat? Are they going to take it out on him?"

"Father, they did take it out on him last night, when they heard I had captured a robber."

CHAPTER XIII

INTRODUCING THE LIBRARIANS OF THE EIGHTH GRADE AND SHOWING THAT GIRLS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM

“**H**OW is the boy-hero this morning?”
“You go and chase yourself.”

Such was the choice bit of conversation I overheard a few days later as I mounted the steps of the school vestibule. The voices were familiar—Alice Morrow’s and David’s.

Alice was grinning fiendishly and David was glowering ferociously. On seeing me, the grin and the glower disappeared like magic, David becoming his stolid self, and Alice smiling sweetly.

“Good morning, Father,” said David.

“Good morning, Father,” said Alice. “David wishes to express the hope that you’ve enjoyed a good night’s rest.”

“Father, I don’t hope any such thing.”

“David,” I said, “she was, to borrow your own expression, ‘stringing you.’”

“Father, I’ll get even.”

“Go in to my office, Alice. David,” I continued as Alice disappeared, “what’s your opinion of girls?”

“Father, they are silly.”

“Is Alice silly, too?”

“Father, she’s the worst of the lot.”

Alice came to report on family affairs. We had thought—Alice and I and the others—that

the holy death of little Margaret would bring about an entire reform in the habits of Mr. Morrow. We had counted on the benedictions of the little child. But we were disappointed, as so many of us are when we attempt to predict God's ways with man. For a week after the funeral Mr. Morrow had gone the old pace, and although he had then come to himself, he was now out of work and spirits alike.

"Papa doesn't feel strong," said Alice. "He had three days' work last week, and then gave up. He said he couldn't stand it. Mama's doing a little sewing at home for the Daltons and Miss Quinlan, and that helps us out a good deal. Papa's going to start work again next week. And say, Father; could I come here every day at about four when David goes, and practise on the typewriter for an hour or so?"

"Why, what's up now?"

"I want to learn it well. I learned a little of it one summer, and with a little practice I think I could get some work and help mama."

"You do?"

"Yes, Father. There's a stenographer in the Young Ladies' Sodality I met here. She had me use her typewriter once, and said I had unusual talent for it. She said that if I gave a little attention to it she would help me, and that she could get me plenty of copying to do."

"But, Alice, you'll be in the business class next year, I hope; and you'll get your typewriting there."

"Yes, Father; but something makes me feel that I won't be able to come to school two years more: I'll consider myself lucky, if I get one

year. And if I do, I am going to do double work."

The request was unusual. After some thought I gave the permission.

"By the way," I continued, "do you tease David?"

Alice smiled merrily.

"Father, we all do."

"Who?"

"We girls of the eighth grade. He's such a funny boy; you don't know him. You ought to see him when he's home, or playing on the street. He makes noise enough for a dozen in his own house, and he's the leader of the Fifth Street hill crowd."

"Has he any fun in him?"

"The boys think he has; but we girls don't. The boys think he is a hero."

"Which will account for a little conversation I overheard this morning."

"His sister Mary and I get him almost crazy sometimes."

"So you're a tease, Alice."

Here was another side of Alice and of David. I thought I knew them both very well. And as for the demure eighth grade girls, it had never occurred to me that they paid David the least attention. I resolved to watch more closely.

On three days of the week the girls of the school have the privilege of getting books out of their library, situated in the outer office. I resolved to be on the watch that afternoon. The librarians, four in number, were girls of the eighth grade.

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Just before the hour for the library was at hand, David came to me and asked:

"Father, have you any errand you'd like me to do?"

"No, David."

A new light dawned on me. I had been edified for several weeks by David's actually *asking* to go on errands. I thought the lad was beginning to show some initiative. Looking back, I now recalled that David's requests for this particular kind of work were proffered just before the girls came in for their books. Also, I remembered that whenever on such occasions I had sent the boy off he had contrived not to get back until the library was closed and the librarians gone. Alice was right: I did not know David, and, what is more, I knew very little about the "Fairy of the Snows."

Meditating humbly on all this, I seated myself close to the door leading into the outer office, and, making a feint of reading, kept my eye on David and the roomful of girls—especially Alice and the librarians—all of whom looked as though butter would not melt in their mouths. They were very busy, too—these librarians—waiting on the girls, picking out books for the smaller ones, and wearing, each of them, a strictly businesslike air. David, meanwhile, with an expression of long-suffering, sat at his desk, as far apart as possible from the librarians. With stern determination on his face, he was reading the adventures of a train-boy who eventually becomes a millionaire by saving a girl in a collision and marrying her and her wealth. The whole scene, as I gazed on it out of the

corner of my eye, was most edifying. I was proceeding, then, to be edified, when, quite casually, Alice Morrow passed by David's desk; bending over as she passed she whispered something in his ear. David acted as though a fly had lighted upon the Celtic beauty of his face; also he frowned horribly and made a mouth. Alice in the meantime was back at her work, her eyes so turned as to catch the effect on David's face of her words. The demure librarians too, I noticed, while apparently as busy as ever with their duties, had their eyes just then on David, too; and seemed by a quick interchange of glances to express a lively appreciation of Alice's whispered remark. Presently, Margaret Logan, an olive-complexioned, bob-haired imp with mischief dancing in her eyes, sallied over and delivered her little message into the unwilling ear of David.

I caught the word "*hero*."

"Cut it out," growled David.

In the next five minutes six of the eighth grade girls paid David their respects. If looks could kill, the office would have been strewn with corpses.

How long had this been going on?

"David," I said, when the librarians had bidden me their usual demure "Good afternoon, Father," "David, for ways that are dark, and for tricks that are vain the Christian young girl is peculiar. What were those girls worrying you about?"

"Father, they call me a hero," and David's face expressed an intense sense of outrage.

"They do?"

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"Yes, and that Morrow girl calls me *her* hero."

"And, David, do you make faces at them?"

"What else can a fellow do? That Margaret Logan stuck out her tongue at me three times."

"When?"

"Just now."

"How could she have done that without my seeing her? It's terrible, isn't it, David?"

"Yes, Father, I think it is."

Ten or twelve days later David entered the office with a clean-shaven head; the beautiful, curly, dark pompadour was gone. For the month of April this proceeding was unusual, and so I expressed myself.

"Yes, Father," assented David.

"Why did you do it, David?"

"Father, I don't like pompadours."

Alice Morrow, it happened, was sent down that morning with a message from her teacher.

Upon seeing the shorn David, extreme delight showed itself plainly upon her features—momentarily, however; for observing that I was watching her, she grew instantly sober.

"Good morning, Father."

"Good morning, Alice. Are you and David good friends?"

"I don't know much about David. His sister and I are very fond of each other."

"David," I said, "are you and Alice good friends?"

"No, Father, we are not."

Sending the lockless youth on an errand, I tried in vain to learn what she knew of David's

hair-cut. Without seeming to, she evaded the question.

"David," I said later that morning—I had noticed several of the eighth grade girls peeping in the office and gazing with various emotions of joy on David's head—"have those girls been teasing you about your hair?"

"Yes, Father, they have—those librarian girls."

"What did they say?"

"That Morrow girl says, 'Oh, what a lovely pompadour!' and rolls her eyes till she looks cock-eyed; and that Logan girl wants to know where I get my hair dye; and," continued David, his voice becoming almost lachrymose, "that Emma Becker wants to know whether I won't let her have a lock of my hair."

"And what about Lucy McFarland, David?"

"Aw!" growled David, forgetting in his emotions his usual dignity in speaking to me, "she wants to know whether I take it off at night. Oh, gee!"

Some days later I informed David on coming to the office that I would leave him in charge that afternoon at 3 o'clock, as I had an engagement with the Rector of the College.

"And, Father, you're not coming back?"

"No, David: we're going out on the hills to visit a family on business; so you can run the office to suit yourself."

As it happened, the family in question, owing to a misunderstanding in regard to the day, was not at home, and Father Rector and myself had nothing for it but to take a car back to the city proper.

"I think," said I, as we got off the car at Sixth and Sycamore, "that if you'll excuse me, Father Rector, I'll take a look in at the school. There may be some mail or some messages."

The clock was striking a quarter past four as I turned into the schoolyard. I had scarcely entered it when from the two windows of my private office an unusual and most astonishing sight caused me to rub my eyes.

It was a chilly day; but both windows were open from the bottom, and out of each were leaning, with their heads stretched as far as possible, three girls—six in all. I recognized at once Margaret Logan with her bobbed hair; Alice Morrow, Emily Becker, Lucy McFarland. The other two I could not distinguish. All of them seemed to be sneezing violently; sometimes all at once, sometimes in duets and trios, and occasionally, so to speak, in solos. Sneezing or not, each girl wore a look of extreme distress.

Dashing up the stairway of the entry, and noticing as I did so a small boy bearing a suspicious resemblance to David, with some unknown contrivance in his hand, disappearing like a frightened jack-rabbit into the music-room, I turned the knob of the outer office door. It was locked. Getting out my keys I opened and entered.

The room leading into my office had no lock; but a strong rope was fastened to the knob and tied to a bench in such a way that those inside were effectually imprisoned.

It was the work of a moment to unfasten the rope.

"Girls!" I cried, "what's the meaning of this?"

"Father," began Alice and sneezed.

"Father," said Margaret Logan, "it was—etchoo!"

"It was Dav—etchoo," supplemented Emma Becker.

"The old billiard—etchoo!—ball," added Lucy.

The whole thing was incredible.

"Do you mean to say," I began, "that David Reilly, my office—etchoo, etchoo, etchoo!"

"Etchoo, etchoo, etchoo!" chimed in the girls, in relays of two and three.

"That my office boy forced you big girls into this room and—etchoo, etchoo, etchoo!"

"Etchoo, etchoo, etchoo!" went the six.

Just then the meekest, solemnest lad that ever fell under my observation stepped as far as the doorway.

"Father," said David, for it was he, "I think you had better come outside into the hall. I think there is Japanese snuff in this room."

"Oh, you think—etchoo!"

"Yes, Father, I think so. I put some of it in here myself."

The girls were already out in the vestibule.

"What's that, David, you've got in your hand?"

"Father," said David, holding it up to the light as we reached the vestibule, and making the statement as though he were telling me of a national calamity, "it's a mouse-trap."

It certainly was; there were six mice in it. The

girls edged away, and, in their horror, left off sneezing.

"What were you doing with that?"

"Nothing, Father."

"Nothing?"

"You see, Father, when I got them through sneezing, I was going to open your office door and tell them to come out."

"Yes."

"And then, Father, when they got into their library, I was going to turn these mice loose on them."

At this solemn declaration, four of the girls squealed, while Alice and Margaret looked daggers at the unhappy youth.

"David, how did you get them into my office?"

"Father, it was easy. I told them there were some new books in your library case that you didn't want them to see."

"Oh!" protested the girls in one scream.

"And they all fell for it: Father, girls just love to rubber."

"Come with me, David," I said, and hurrying into the outer office I shut the door, and laughed for fully three minutes, while David looked on helplessly. Had I been dying he could not have been graver. He still held the mouse-trap.

"David," I said at last, "do you know that you're a humorist?"

"No, Father: I didn't know that."

"Are you any relation to Tom Sawyer?"

"I don't know, Father: does he live in this parish?"

"Aren't you a first cousin to Huckleberry Finn?"

"Father, I don't know the names of all my relations. But to-night I'll ask my mother."

"David, how would you like to be a comedian?"

"What's that, Father?"

"How would you like to be a clown?"

David smiled.

"I think I should like it very much, Father."

From that day till David left my service, rejoicing in a fresh pompadour, the girls of the eighth and other grades, with two exceptions as we shall subsequently see, treated David Reilly with profound respect.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FAIRY OF THE FOOTLIGHTS DAZZLES DAVID REILLY, AND, IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALICE MORROW, PRACTISES UP-TO-DATE ASCETICISM

IN THE meantime the Communion class was going on day after day with what appeared to be most edifying results. The boys and girls, especially the very small ones, were quick and responsive. Every Saturday, it was a touching sight to see little toddlers of six and seven, both boys and girls, attending the seven o'clock Mass of their own initiative and without the guardianship of the nuns and brothers. The teachers, too, reported the marked change for the better, both in lessons and conduct, which they observed in their little charges. Among those who were especially mentioned was Elsie Morrow. The mantle of little Margaret seemed to have fallen upon her; in course of time she came to rival her sister Alice, not only in conduct and attention, but also in quickness of grasp.

Three weeks before the great day there came to my office a girl and a little woman, who proved to be her mother. My heart sank on seeing them. Every morning for a period of over ten days had I been pestered with women from other parishes who wanted to get their children at the eleventh hour in the class of the six hundred. Here, I thought, is another.

"Good morning, Father," said the little woman; "my name is Mrs. Elwood, and this is my little girl, Grace."

"How do you do, Father," said little Grace, a child dainty in dress and carriage and strikingly pretty.

"The pleasure is mine," I said.

"Father," continued Mrs. Elwood, "I understand that you are preparing a class for First Communion."

"So you've found it out at last, have you?" I said. The people who were just hearing of the existence of a class already under instruction for five months was getting on my nerves.

"I just came to town two days ago, Father," said Mrs. Elwood.

"Oh—I beg your pardon; but all the same it's too late to put your little Grace in a class that's been going on since January."

"Perhaps it is, Father." And the poor woman looked disappointed, and, perhaps I imagined it, sighed.

"Oh," said I, beginning to realize that I was rather brutal, and touched, also, by the evident dismay which had come upon Grace's face, "perhaps I have been hasty; and has your little daughter had any religious training?"

"Oh, yes, Father," put in Grace; "I was preparing in Pittsburgh for about three months, and mama and I had to go away last week just ten days before the children were to make their First Communion."

"Come into my private office," I said.

On examining Grace I found that she was really well instructed.

"Why, Mrs. Elwood," I said, "this child is fit to make her Communion now."

"I knew it—I knew it," cried Grace with evident joy. "Mama, I said all along that Father Carney would let me in his class."

"Hold on," I said. "Where do you live, Mrs. Elwood?"

"Wherever we check our trunks," she answered with a touching smile.

"Oh! And where are you staying just now?"

"At the Dennison."

"Very good; that's in our parish. Well, if you stop checking your trunk for three weeks longer it will afford me great pleasure to have Grace make her Communion with the class of St. Xavier."

"Thank you so much, Father. It takes a weight off my mind. I really had to leave Pittsburgh; it was a case of necessity. We ran out of work there, and there were several good engagements offered me in Cincinnati."

"Engagements!" I echoed. "May I ask what you are doing?"

"We are actresses," put in Grace; "we are the Elwood Sisters, song and dance artists—aren't we, mama?"

"And how do you like the profession?" I asked Grace, looking at the child with renewed interest.

"Oh, I've been so long at it I'm tired of it," she said with a gesture perfectly expressive of weariness.

"How long have you been at it?"

"Five years."

"And how old are you, Grace?"

"I'm ten years old, Father!"

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed.

It was quickly settled that Grace should call at my office every morning at ten on the chance of her getting an opportunity during the ensuing hour of receiving a little private instruction. I cautioned the child not to speak to the other children about her "profession"—a caution entirely unnecessary—and finally put her in the hands of Alice Morrow, who was to entertain her after the morning instructions and on such other occasions as should arise. To Alice alone of all the girls was confided the secret that there was in our class a professional actress.

The usually stolid Dave, who paid no attention, as a rule, to visitors, was all alive with interest on the occasion of my introduction to the two who "lived where they checked their trunks." Before we retired into the inner office David had, during my short conversation with them, kept his eye steadily on both. There was a certain awe upon his features, indicated by an open mouth and a rigid stare. As I showed my two visitors out of the office, David jumped from his chair—a thing I had never known him to do unbidden—and hurrying to the door held it open. He also held his mouth open, and his eyes followed with a rare constancy every move of Grace Elwood.

Grace caught his stare as she neared the door.

"Are you Father Carney's clerk?" she asked, smiling into David's face.

David, clinging to the door, drew back as

far as it was physically possible to go, and, at bay in the corner, replied: "I'm only his office boy, ma'am."

"My name's Grace!" said the little miss, moving a step nearer, to the manifest dismay of the office boy, who was edging behind the door.

"Oh, is it?"

As the two went out, David, instead of closing the door on them, followed them into the vestibule, and, again allowing his jaw to drop, craned his head forward and continued to stare to such an extent that his eyes struck me as being in danger of popping out of his head.

"David," I called, "perhaps you'd like to follow those two down the street, would you?"

"Yes, Father," said David, re-entering the office with one last, long, lingering look, "I would."

"Possibly that little girl is your long-lost sister?"

"No, Father," answered David, in whose face still remained evidence of unusual excitement. "Father," he continued, with unconscious sarcasm, "you can't lose my sisters. Father, that little girl is an actor!"

"Oh, she's an actor, is she? Who told you?"

"I heard her and the lady talking about an engagement they were going to have next Saturday and Sunday night at the theatre in Lawrenceburgh, Indiana."

"You appear, David, to be singularly interested. What's the matter?"

"Father, I never saw an actor before!"

"Have you never been to the theatre, David?"

"Oh, yes, Father; I saw two shows. I saw Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Midnight Express."

"I thought you said you had never seen an actor?"

"Oh, I saw them on the stage. But I didn't know they went around like other people."

"Indeed! Well, David, I suppose you intend to tell the Fifth Street hill crowd that you've seen a live actress."

"Yes, Father, at noon-time."

"Can you keep a secret, David?"

"Yes, Father."

"Very good: tell no one that Grace Elwood is an actress. She is here to make her First Communion, and wants no publicity."

Grace was punctual each morning. Besides coming to the school office she and her mother were seen daily at the children's Mass. One thing struck me from the first: Grace was never alone. Whether in church or on the street or in my office, the vigilant Mrs. Elwood was always beside her. Mrs. Elwood practised what the mothers of all juvenile actresses profess to do: she never left the child unattended. As a result, the little actress was as innocent, as frank, as winsome and as unsophisticated as a child in good surroundings and under the care of a good mother.

Although Grace was awaiting my pleasure in the outer office each day from ten to eleven, it was only for a few minutes, snatched from imperative duties, that I was able to instruct her. But time did not appear to hang heavy on her hands. She flitted about, like a butterfly,

from office to music-room, alighting, to continue the figure, now on the piano, where she picked out tunes rather cleverly, now on the library shelves, where she examined books with pictures, and now on the typewriter. David she kept in a state of perpetual excitement. The youth in her presence unbent very much. Not content with following her flight in a perpetual stare, he smiled on her now and then, as I noticed with mild surprise. As for Grace, she made herself quite at home with David, chattering at him, making him explain the workings of the typewriter to her, and, unceremoniously driving him from his seat, taking his place, and beating out with grim determination her own name and David's in capital letters, while David stood by with a look, as who should say he was entertaining an angel and was aware of it. So friendly did the young couple become that Mrs. Elwood, seated in a chair, reading a book, would at times raise her voice against the overgreat vivacity of her little daughter.

In the Communion class Grace was quite different; all her vivacity was gone. She was as quiet and demure as any girl—and that is saying a good deal—could be; and it is doubtful whether a single boy and more than a handful of the girls were aware of her addition to the ranks of the six hundred.

Alice Morrow, quite proud of being delegated by me to take care of her, was extremely attentive to the child. Not content with the ordinary civilities, she showed Grace all over the school from basement to hall, explained to her the different grades and divisions, and so

impressed Mrs. Elwood that that solicitous mother, after the first few days, was content to stay in the office when and so long as Grace was in the hands of the enthusiastic Alice.

Although there was quite a difference in their respective ages, the two, I fancy, must within the first twenty-four hours of their acquaintance have vowed eternal friendship. In each other's company they chattered like Tennyson's brook, and having exchanged with each other all the secrets they happened to possess, proceeded, each of them, to make up new ones, and thus kept burning the fires of friendship.

Before the third day was passed they were both wrapped in mystery. Every now and then during a brisk and animated conversation they would exchange dark looks and mysterious signs; and failing, as was generally the case, to make themselves understood, would retire apart out of earshot of Mrs. Elwood and the marvelling David, where they each would take turn in whispering into each other's ears. Not content with this form of converse, they at times, within striking distance of each other, wrote notes; in which case David, the mystified, was called upon first by Grace, and, seeing how submissive he was under the treatment, subsequently by Alice, to carry these communications—with strict injunctions of care and secrecy—from one to the other.

Nor did this effusiveness of youthful affection seem to interfere in the least with their devotions. After the eleven o'clock class the two, having spent five minutes or so in the exchange of secrets and signs, would sally forth with

great dignity to St. Xavier Church for a visit. Generally, they were standing on the top step at a quarter to twelve waiting to greet me with lively gestures of welcome as I passed the church on my way to dinner. Happening to leave the office on two or three occasions a little before the third quarter struck, and passing through the church, I was pleased to observe that each, kneeling devoutly, with clasped hands, *and oblivious of each other*, was really tremendously in earnest.

In the afternoon the Head-Sister had each day a special session of the girls belonging to the Communion class. To this did Grace without fail repair, after which she and Alice would, following some open chatter and more whispered secrets, seat themselves in the outer office, one at the table, the other at the desk, and write each other lengthy notes. None of us ever saw these notes: nor could wild horses drag them from the two friends. Not even an inkling of their contents was ever vouchsafed us. The exchange of notes accomplished, the little spring maidens, after bestowing a word on Mrs. Elwood, David, and myself, just to show that they had not forgotten us, would both, often in the same breath, declare that it was high time for their afternoon visit and Way of the Cross; whereupon they would issue forth and remain absent for a good half hour. Violent as their love appeared to be, it must be said, in justice to the Fairy of the Snows and the Fairy of the Footlights, that their love really did in "higher love endure." A little more, and the fairies, so it seemed, would

become angels—angels, at least, in innocence and in a joy which found itself deeply rooted in the supernatural.

To me their innocent and heart-whole devotion to Our Lord was inexpressibly touching; to David it was a source of unfailing amazement. Together, Grace and Alice read—or, rather, Alice did the reading—a book entitled “Maidens of Hallowed Names.” They had not gone far in these charming sketches of holy virgins when both were for becoming saints out of hand. Alice was for wearing a hair-shirt; Grace favored the use of the discipline, which, in her ordinary conversation, she was pleased to call a cat-o’-nine-tails. The difficulty of getting these instruments of penance, together with some discouraging criticisms from Mrs. Elwood and myself, brought them to compromise on abstinence from cake, candy, ice-cream, and pickles! Alice was against the embargo on pickles; but Grace insisted and carried the day.

The fairies discussed their plans for sanctification in my presence with great freedom, encouraged to this, I take it, by the fact that I—hypocrite that I was!—made as though I paid no attention to their words. Seated at my desk, making pretense of reading or writing, I listened to discussions on the ascetic life which would have astonished Rodriguez and other immortal authorities.

Vigils were taken up, and set aside; fasting was given more attention. They were quite serious on this point, and Alice was careful to point out to Grace the clear difference between fasting and abstinence. Both resolved that with

the approval of their confessor they would abstain on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays in general, and, during Lent, all days, Sundays included; also, that they would fast on all Fridays of the entire year. The pathos of it all was that Alice, without knowing it, was, up to this period of her life, practically fasting and abstaining from the first of January to the last of December. I have an idea that these noble resolves were sternly undone by their confessor. I was their confessor.

Finally, the retreat—three days of silence and prayer—was at hand. When the fairies were around, you could almost feel the silence. There was silence in their steps, silence in their expressions, in their carriage—they simply radiated silence; and when David, in an unguarded moment, gave them a jovial good morning, you should have seen the indignant looks with which they stabbed the thoughtless offender.

On the morning of the last day of the retreat, I was informed by David that Alice and Grace were outside and wanted each to see me privately.

"And, Father," added David, "Alice says it is very important."

"Send in the nearest, David."

Grace entered.

"Well, my little friend," I said, "sit down."

Grace climbed into a chair, and turning in her toes, which just contrived to touch the floor, presented to me a face as solemn as David Reilly's.

"Father," she said, "I've been reading the

lives of the women saints—that is, Alice has been reading them for me.”

“So I noticed, Grace, and I trust it has done you good.”

“I hope so, Father. We’ve both been thinking a good deal; and I’ve been trying so hard to be a good little girl.”

“Yes, I see that.”

“But it’s my past that is worrying me,” continued the Fairy of the Footlights, turning in her toes to a most extraordinary angle.

“Your past?” I gasped.

“Yes. I’ve been thinking of leaving the stage and leading a life of what-you-call-it—of penance in a cave.”

“The way some of the great women penitents did?” I inquired with a straight face.

“Yes, Father. I’ve been very wicked. Sometimes I won’t get up till mama shakes me; and I used to hurry through my prayers—and skip some; and then, Father, the way I used to talk back to my mother! It was shocking; and, Father, I’m so proud and vain. I just love to be praised.”

“So do I,” I said in parenthesis.

“I see how bad I’ve been now,” continued the Fairy, crossing her knees and looking earnestly at the ceiling. I never thought I was so bad. Of course, I didn’t intend to commit any big sins.”

“So you want to lead the life of a penitent?”

“Yes, Father.”

“What are you going to do with your mother?”

“Oh, I didn’t think of that!”

"Your penance, my little girl, will be to honor and obey your mother till you grow up, and then, if I'm around, you may come to me for further advice."

"But, Father—about those sins of my past. I didn't really intend to commit mortal sins."

"And be sure, Grace, that you didn't. Think less about your past, and more about the Christ you are to receive to-morrow who was Himself a child as you are. As regards penances, never do anything without asking your mother or your confessor."

"Thank you, Father," and the Fairy, breaking into smiles which expressed the passing away of a host of scruples, uncurled herself, hopped to the floor, and skipped from the room.

Then entered Alice. She, too, had fought, it would appear, with lions and tigers of the spiritual world.

"Father, I've been looking over my past in the bitterness of my soul."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed: "and you've been making choice extracts from some of your spiritual readings, haven't you?"

"I *did* see that in a book," admitted Alice, "and it fits my case perfectly."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed once more.

"Father, I've been a terrible hypocrite all my life," went on the Angel of the Snows.

"A hypocrite!" I echoed.

"Yes; and a liar. St. Augustine wasn't near so bad as I was: and he said, 'So small a boy, so great a sinner.'"

"I know you pretty well, Alice, and I don't see that you are either a hypocrite or a liar."

"Ah, that's just it, Father! I've fooled you. When I found out that papa was drinking, I kept it a secret from you."

"I don't blame you, my dear."

"Neither does mama; she told me not to let you know."

"People," I observed, "are not hypocrites when they don't go around and tell other people's sins."

"But, Father, I was always dodging so that people wouldn't know what was the matter at home. Look how kind Miss Margaret and Miss Teresa were to us; and, for ever so long we kept back the truth; and then, Father, I'm just worried sick about that lie I told you. Father, I'm beginning to think it was a mortal sin. Was it, Father?"

Then I thought to myself—the nearest thing to a mortal sin on that memorable occasion was not the lie which Alice told, but the cruel and angry words I had spoken.

"No, my dear," I answered: "to begin with, you didn't think at the time you were committing a big sin——"

"Father," broke in Alice, "I really didn't know what to say or do. It is an awful hard thing for a little girl to say that her father was drunk; it—it—*humbles*. And, then, mama told me over and over that I should not let you know anything about it."

"It would take the wisdom of an older head than you had then," said I, "to get out of such a situation. Don't bother about that point any more, Alice."

"I'll not, Father; but that's not all. All my

life I've been pretending to you that I'm serious, and I'm not. Father, I'm full of frivolity."

"Good gracious!" I said for the third time.

"Yes, Father, I like to play tricks."

"So do I."

"And I love to tease people."

"So do I."

"And I do so like to be admired."

"You do!"

"Yes, it's terrible."

"Alice, tell me: do you do anything foolish, or that you think wrong to gain admiration?"

"I think not, Father; that is I—to be safe, Father, I'll say yes."

"Instead of trying first to please men, my dear, try always to do first what you think will please Our Lord, and then you needn't worry. Is there anything else, Alice?"

"Yes, Father; how can we cure papa? I have prayed and prayed, and so have mama and Elsie, and we never know what's going to happen to him on Saturday night."

"It's a sad case, Alice; your father, I'm afraid, can't help himself entirely. There was a time when he could; but that time seems to be past. He feels his weakness very keenly. He has come to me several times to tell me how hard he is fighting."

Alice was weeping.

"Poor papa," she sobbed, "I'd give my life to-morrow to cure him, and I'm going to offer up my First Communion for him, and that ought to count."

"It certainly should," said I.

"And to-day, this afternoon," continued Alice,

growing suddenly radiant, "I'm going to make my general confession, and when I think of a general confession, Father, do you know what I think of?"

"What, Alice?"

"Of the text, 'Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.' This afternoon, I hope I am going to have a soul, think of it, whiter than snow!"

And the Fairy of the Snows was gone.

"Good gracious!" I cried for the fourth time, and would fain have lapsed into meditation on holiness and innocence, had not David interrupted me with the information that the outer office was filled with First Communicants who wished to see me privately and, as some put it, on important business.

CHAPTER XV

JENNY JENKINS ONCE MORE—THE TWO FAIRIES NURSE A SECRET

THE third Sunday after Easter, the great Feast of St. Joseph, is always a memorable and beautiful day in St. Xavier's parish. In the early sunshine of that morning innocence and love and high desire issue from home and tenement in the shape of simple-hearted little boys and modest little girls; and the streets, so lately tenanted by night-prowlers and all the various followers of dissipation, forget the ugliness and the sin of the darker hours, and grow bright to welcome the living flowers of Christ. Down the Sixth Avenue hill in groups of two and three come little boys and girls, clean and neat and pretty and unworldly in their attire. Down the Fifth Avenue hill comes another host; down Sycamore and up Sycamore come others. From North and South and East and West they come and from every footstep blessings rise and make the city with all its sordidness and sin a thing of beauty to Him who so loves children. Men and women, too, are on the street, fathers, mothers, relations, and friends; and one can see that tender memories of other days like the present one have brought them for the nonce near to heaven, because they have, as it were, become little children, too.

The First Communicants disappear within the walls of the school building, and all is silence.

Devoted Sisters—how devoted, how long-suffering, I dare not attempt to express—are at hand to receive and care for the girls—and the Misses Dalton with several officers of the Young Ladies' Sodality see that each little boy looks his bravest in a white sash over his blue coat and that a white flower graces his youthful breast.

Going down to the office that morning before the Mass, I found little Jenny Jenkins with Mrs. Mary Milton awaiting me at the entry.

Jenny, the reader may possibly remember, was the little girl of eleven who "never got up" on Sunday. Jenny had a hopeless mother, who, while starving and stinting her children, contributed assiduously, the year round, to the support of two or three saloon-keepers in her neighborhood. In the time not given to sleeping and the neglect of her work as a charwoman, she loved to hear the cannican clink, and to that end trained little Jenny carefully into the safe carriage of the little tin bucket—a very distant relation to the moss-covered bucket that hung in the well. Jenny's bucket was a stranger to the fluid which has made the moss-covered bucket famous. Outside of school-hours the exits and entrances of life to Jenny Jenkins were the saloon back-doors over which one could read the hideously ironical inscription: "Ladies' Sitting Room."

All during the preparation for the great day, Jenny had been on the "waiting list." Irregular in coming to school, missing Mass freely, showing little or no interest in making herself ready, I had often been minded to put her out of the class, and have her content herself with

going to Holy Communion privately. Even up to the day before the retreat the question hung unsettled. Then Mrs. Milton came into the vexed question and solved it.

It was the custom of the good woman each year to fit out one poor little girl for the solemn reception of Our Lord; and this year the lot had fallen upon Jenny Jenkins. Mrs. Milton took the trouble to look into Jenny's environment, and she saw that it was not good. In fact, she considered it impossible. She communicated her impressions to the child's mother in no uncertain terms, and, by great good luck, Mrs. Jenkins was sober enough at the time to follow Mrs. Milton's strictures. Mrs. Milton, furthermore, laid down the law and exacted from the mother certain concessions. Then the good woman came to me.

"Father," she said, "that poor little child, Jenny Jenkins, cannot possibly get ready at her own home to make her First Communion properly."

"So it appears," I said. "The fact is, Mrs. Milton, I'm so disgusted with little Jenny that I've about made up my mind to put her out of the class to-morrow morning."

"Poor child! You wouldn't do that, Father. She has no chance at all. She'd be a thousand times better off if her mother were dead."

"I'm not thinking of Jenny, so much, Mrs. Milton, as of the others in her class. She is giving such bad example."

"But, Father, she won't these next three days. I've arranged for all that. Father, I scared her mother into letting Jenny stay with me from

now till next Sunday night. She'll have plenty of time to say her prayers and get her rest, and I promise you I'll do everything for her as though she were my own child."

"Mrs. Milton, shake hands! You've solved a question that has given me no end of annoyance."

And so during the three days of special preparation little Jenny had been in time for Mass, regular in the afternoon, and, so her teacher had told me, a wonderfully changed girl.

Remembering all this, I confronted the two in the vestibule. And what a transformation had come over the tawdrily dressed Jenny of the heavy, dull-colored face, and the unkempt hair! This morning her eyes were bright, her cheek faintly reminiscent of the rose, and her white dress and veil discovered to me for the first time the pathetic beauty of her gypsy-like face framed in raven-black hair; and, wonder of wonders, holiness had touched the features of the little child, touched them so that she looked then as sweet, as innocent, and as winsome as any child I had seen that morning.

"Father," said Mrs. Milton, "here's Jenny come to thank you for all your kindness, and especially for allowing her to go on with her First Communion. She's been with me three days, Father, and I can say that a nicer, sweeter, better little girl I would not want to have near me. Oh, Father! If that girl had half a chance, she'd be as good as the best. You should have seen her pray morning and night.

Why, last evening the little thing had almost to be forced from her knees. God help her! God help her! Father, she wants to say something to you."

I turned my eyes to the new Jenny Jenkins. The hardness, the boldness were gone from her face, and in their place was the sweet air of childhood of which she had been this long time robbed.

"Father," she said—even her voice had grown lovely—"I want you to pray for me that I may keep good. I know I've been bad and I'm sorry."

"And, Jenny," put in Mrs. Milton, "what are you going to ask Our Lord when you receive Him?"

"Father, I am going to ask him to die, if I am in danger of growing up bad."

The child's evident sincerity moved me so that I could not trust myself to speak.

"And now, Father, bless me that I may keep it up."

That child of the worst possible tenement, of the worst possible home, of an absolutely impossible mother, brought the tears to my eyes. There were fervent Communions made that morning, but while many approached the Holy Table with like sentiments of faith and love, I doubt whether any brought such touching humility as that abandoned child of the tenement.

The Mass, with the Communion service, lasted over an hour, and it was quite late in the morning when I took my breakfast. For some reason or other I felt very tired, and, instead of going down at once to the school office, I

rested in my room. It was half-past ten o'clock or more before I arrived at the office, and there I found Alice Morrow and Grace Elwood awaiting me.

"Why, children," I exclaimed, "haven't you gone home for your breakfast yet?"

"No, Father," said Alice. "We couldn't go without thanking you for all your kindness."

"Mama was here, too," added Grace, "but the fasting made her feel sick, and she's waiting for me at the Ideal Cafetiere. Father, she sends you this," and Grace handed me an envelope, containing, as I afterward discovered, a large bill—"and asks you to use it for your school. And, Father, I want to thank you again, and I promise you I'm going to do my best to be a good little girl."

"Thank you, children; but you are not angels yet, and I think you'd both better toddle away, and get your breakfast."

"But, Father, we want your blessing first." I gave it right willingly.

"And, Grace," I said, "am I to see you and your mother no more?"

"Oh, I hope so, Father: it looks as if we shall be here for two weeks longer. We work every night next week in Covington, and we work three nights after that in Newport, and I'm coming over here every noon-time, and, when I can, every afternoon to see you and meet Alice."

"You will be welcome."

"And, Father," put in Alice, "would you mind our going over to the music-room when there's no one using it?"

"What's up now?"

The Fairy of the Footlights and the Fairy of the Snows began to make all manner of facial and manual signals at each other. Grace seemed to propose something to which Alice strongly objected.

"Father," said Alice at length, "it's a secret: but we'll let you know in good time."

And with this I had to be satisfied. The two white-robed innocents bade me an elaborate farewell, both executing with perfect grace Alice's elaborate curtsy.

CHAPTER XVI

SHOWING HOW AND WITH WHAT RESULTS THE FAIRIES UNDERTOOK TO TRAIN DAVID REILLY

ARE piety and mischief irreconcilable? Are they even far apart? Do they not, in some cases, go hand in hand? These questions rose in my mind full many a time during the days that followed the First Communion Sunday. Nearly all the children in their first fervor—greatly to the annoyance of several mothers, who, like Kipling's Vampire, "never could understand"—were making brave efforts to go to Holy Communion every day; and concomitantly, if not in consequence, there was more of silvery laughter, more liveliness in class, more happy faces in St. Xavier School than ever before.

In the matter of mischief Alice Morrow and Grace Elwood appeared to lead all the rest; but the same was true of their piety. On Monday, which was a holiday, they went from the office to the music-room, from the music-room to the church, and from the church back to the office, and then *da capo*. A man who did not like children would suppose that they visited the church to meditate mischief. David was a much disturbed boy all that day. It was impossible for him to sink into the lethargy which characterized him during office-hours, a lethargy, be it said, which completely disappeared once he was on his native heath—the Fifth Street hill, where he was now known as the demon roller-skater.

David had not yet got rid of his awe for a real actor. Grace presented to his untaught and simple imagination all the glory and mystery of life. The young miss had not been slow to discover David's point of view in her regard, and she was prompt to avail herself of what opportunities it presented. David was drawing a salary from me; at the time he was really working for Grace Elwood.

On returning from their first visit to the church, Grace, ably assisted by Alice, took the hapless youth in hand with unusual vivacity and characteristic energy. In my own office, without showing too overt an interest, I was able to follow the proceedings almost completely.

"David," began Grace, "what book is that you are reading?"

"It's Treasure Island," said David raising his head, and then dropping it again. David was interested: there was a good deal of killing going on in the particular chapter he was then reading.

"Do you notice," said Alice in a very loud whisper, "how David reads with his finger? He has to guide himself from line to line like a boy of the first grade. That's the way my brother Frank used to read his second reader book."

"And just see," added Grace, "the way he leans over when he's reading."

The unhappy youth, who, had he been deaf, could hardly have missed the import of these whispers, dropped his book, raised his eyes, and finding that the two fairies were considering him with thoughtful regard, smiled sheepishly.

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"He doesn't even know how to smile," continued Grace in the same far-reaching whisper.

"It's a gingerly smile," commented Alice; "you'd think he's afraid of letting himself go for fear of cracking his face."

"Perhaps it's his curly hair," Grace observed. "He blushes," she added, "naturally enough, doesn't he?"

"What has his curly hair got to do with it?" Alice inquired.

"I was thinking," Grace made answer, "of part of a song mama and I used to sing. It brought down the house many a time.

'There was a boy in our old town
Who dressed in killing style,
His hair was curled so very tight
He didn't dare to smile!'

David threw himself back in his chair, and looked almost as dazed as he really was.

"David," continued Grace, "please take up that book again. Now go on with your reading—go on, I say. Oh! that's it."

Grace would seem to have hypnotized the leader of the Fifth Street hill. He raised the book about two inches from his desk, craned his head, placed his finger so that it might act the part of a guide, and, moving his lips, went on to comply with Grace's command.

The two fairies gave David ten minutes of their valuable time, pointing out that if he ever became a priest, the movement of his lips would stand him in good stead, but under present circumstances was entirely unnecessary, showing him how much more graceful it was to bring the

book up toward the eyes instead of contracting a stoop and a hump, and making him withdraw from the page the moving finger, which, as Grace candidly remarked, needed washing badly.

Then the fairies went to the music-room, and left David, as I noticed with no little amusement, sedulously endeavoring to carry out their instructions.

On returning from their next visit to the church, they took up David again.

First, Grace ascertained whether he wore a scapular, inquired as to whether he said his night and morning prayers, and receiving favorable answers expressed herself as being quite satisfied.

"David," she then went on, "do you know that you are a—a—gawk."

"No," said David, "is it something good?"

"Not at all," said Alice severely.

"What is it?" asked David.

"You don't know how to carry yourself," exclaimed Alice.

"I don't *want* to carry myself," answered David.

"You don't stand right, you don't sit right, you don't walk right, and you don't carry your head right," explained Grace.

David, who had risen, smiled a sickly smile.

"There you are," exclaimed Grace, "with the stingiest smile I ever saw."

"You'd think," apostrophized Alice, "that he had rheumatism in both his jaws. David, when you smile, let yourself go."

For three minutes David took lessons in smil-

ing; it was a wonder I didn't choke to death. Then he was made to walk up and down the floor for ten minutes more, particular attention being paid to his head and his shoulders. Also, Grace gravely gave him a few "tips" on his way of standing, "tips" she calmly observed, which would keep people from thinking him bowlegged, "which," she continued, "you certainly are not."

Before leaving for the music-room, Grace marked with little slips of paper some dozen prayers which she had previously found in one of Father Lasance's books of devotion, and enjoined David to typewrite two copies of each, one for herself and one for Alice, specifying carefully the size of the paper to be used, and the amount of margin and spacing—all this to be done against their return.

And when they did return, after an unusually long session in the music-room and an equally long time in the church, the typewritten prayers, done in David's very best style, were awaiting them. Grace was loud in her expressions of thanks; indeed, she was so pleased that she must bring them in to me. Of course, in the face of such enthusiasm, I felt bound to examine them with a certain deliberation. The dialogue, in the next room, made it, in my judgment, worth while prolonging this examination. My eyes were on the typewritten pages, but my ears and whole attention were absorbed in the speakers without.

"David," came the voice of Alice, "is it true that you really followed Grace Elwood and her mother over to the Ideal Cafetiere, and stood

outside, and flattened your nose against the window glass to see whether Grace really ate and drank like other people?"

"No, it is not true. It's a lie. I never done it."

"Don't be rude, David; it's hard enough to stand your grammar. And didn't you stay so long there with your nose flattened against the window that a lieutenant of police came over and told you to move on?"

"Oh gee!" growled David, "who's been stuffing you? I didn't look in to see what she was eating, and there wasn't any cop around."

"David," pursued Alice severely, "is it true that when Grace Elwood came here the second day for catechism that you pinched her to see whether she was real?"

Alice, be it said, knew her Nicholas Nickleby, and, in consequence, the Crummles family.

"That's another lie," cried David hotly. "I never thought of such a thing—O Lord!" And there was a sound of a chair thrown roughly to one side, and of retreating footsteps not at all fairy-like. David had incontinently departed to nurse a noble rage.

"They are certainly well done," I said, now that the dialogue had come to an end, "and the prayers are very beautiful."

On the day previous to the Elwood's departure Grace waited on me.

"Father, would you mind my having the use of the St. Nicholas Hall to-night from eight to nine?"

"I think it can be arranged."

"Oh, it is arranged!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes; Jerry knows all about it, and David. And, Father, will you come over: Alice and I have a surprise for you?"

"I'll be on hand; but alone?"

"Oh, you'll not be alone, Father. My mother will be there, and Mr. and Mrs. Morrow with their children, and all those nice young ladies who helped the boys and the girls on First Communion morning."

At eight o'clock, I entered the hall, and took a seat between Jerry and David. There were fully forty people present, all evidently expecting a treat. The Fairy of the Snows and the Fairy of the Footlights were not to be seen.

Scarcely had I seated myself when Miss Margie Burns, the regular and accomplished accompanist at all our school entertainments, struck a chord, and out skipped from behind the curtain at the rear of the very modest stage the two fairies. Beautifully, modestly attired—one could see in their costumes, the skilled needle of Mrs. Morrow and the stage-experience of Mrs. Elwood—the fairies all radiant in smiles, made the famous curtsy I now knew so well. Another chord and then the piano and the fairies were hard at it giving us the Highland Fling. It was the Highland Fling with a vengeance and with variations. And yet, so modest was it withal, that it gave no hint of the vulgarizing vaudeville shows; so graceful withal, that it did express the poetry of motion.

The next number was the Sailor's Horn-Pipe; followed by the Irish Lilt. There came, after these graceful and innocent dances, a song num-

ber, which, I am bound to say, was not particularly good—the taint of professional vaudeville, the vulgarizing taint, was faintly present.

An intermission, devoted to ice-cream and cake, allowed the entertainers to change their costume: and then for full thirty minutes they held us spellbound with selected folk-dances of nearly all European nations.

We were all very much interested; none so much as David. He was absorbed.

“Gosh!” he observed to Jerry three distinct times, “I wish *I* was an actor.”

“Now, Father,” cried Grace as both at the end rushed out and caught my hand, “now you know why we were always going to the music-room. We got up this show just to please you. Oh, Father, weren’t you pleased?”

“I certainly was. It was all of it very, very beautiful, very graceful. It was—the dancing especially—an hour in fairyland.”

“Why, Father,” exclaimed Grace, great delight on her expressive face, “that’s precisely what we were trying to be; we imagined we were fairies.”

“And you are Fairies, my children. You, Alice, are the Fairy of the Snows, and you, Grace, are the Fairy of the Footlights.”

“Oh!” cried Mrs. Elwood, “you’ve given me a capital bit of matter for advertising. How does this sound:—‘Grace Elwood, the Light-foot Fairy of the Footlights.’ There’s money in such an ad.”

“Mrs. Elwood,” said Alice, “went over all our work, and cut a lot out. And, Father, Grace has taught me all her dances.”

"She had an apt pupil," commented Mrs. Elwood. "I've never seen any child to whom dancing comes so natural. Father," she added in a lower tone, "she could go on the stage to-morrow; but, for the love of God, don't let her. It's all well enough for little Grace now; but I must get away from the stage before she is many years older."

"Say, Father," said David as we went down the stairs, "it was great!"

Mrs. Elwood and Grace made much of bidding me farewell. They were all gratitude and good-will; and their gratitude and good-will, I may add, remain unchanged to this day.

Towards seven of the evening some days later I happened to be passing the school on my return from a sick-call, when Jerry, who was coming out of the front entrance, accosted me.

"Father," he began, "have you noticed anything strange about David lately?"

"Beyond the fact that he carries his head high, and walks so as not to appear bowlegged, I can't say I have."

"Well, come in and just take a peep in the music-room."

On tip-toe we went up the steps of the vestibule. The twilight was well advanced; we were in the dark. The music-room, however, was just then illuminated by three electric lights over the piano. We could, therefore, see through the door glass without being seen. David was placing a record on the Victrola; having done which, he jumped back, and took a position which to my unanointed gaze gave me the impression that he was about to make a

start in a hundred yard dash. Presently, the music, it was the Highland Fling, started, and with it started David. Holding one hand over his head in a gesture intended to express a graceful curve, and planting the other against his side, David set to hopping heavily from one foot to the other. It was easy to tell from the music, but *only* from the music, that David was attempting the Highland Fling. He changed his steps from time to time, and, whenever, on occasion, he swung around, he lowered both hands and gingerly grasped the skirts of his coat. Encouraged by his success, David undertook to kick his feet a little higher; in which feat, I am bound to say, he was unusually successful. David began to smile. Then, intoxicated by success, he grasped his coat with each hand, rose on his toes, and raised one foot high in the air. Suddenly down he came, flat on his back. There should have been a fractured skull, but, as a matter of fact, there was nothing of the sort. David picked himself up, and then, as our laughter broke from control, turned quickly, put out the light, and, before we could adjust our eyes to the change, was gone.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH FATHER CARNEY LOSES HIS TEMPER

DAVID, one morning early in June, looked very heavy and sleepy.

"What's the matter, David?" I inquired, pausing at the door of my office.

"Father, I was up late last night."

"Oh, you were? Writing poetry?"

"No, Father, I do not write poetry. They had 'amateur night' at the Happy Hour moving-picture showhouse on Vine Street, and I went down there."

"Were any of your friends on the bill?"

"Father, I was on the bill myself."

I removed my hand from the doorknob and sat down on the nearest chair.

"'Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!' " I quoted.

"What's that, Father?"

"Did you dance, David?"

"No, Father, I didn't get a chance."

"What *did* you do?"

"I sang a song."

"You did? What was it?"

"Silver Threads Among the Gold."

"David, do you mean to tell me that you had the face to appear before a presumably crowded house, and bawl out to them the astonishing news, 'Darling, I am growing old'?"

"Please, Father, that's all the farther I got."

"What happened? Did you break down?"

"No, Father, I did not break down, but Pat Noonan was there, and he up and hollered, 'No you ain't neither, sweetheart,' and the team was there and they shouted, 'Cut it out,' and things like that. And then everybody began to raise a fuss, a-laughin' and a-snickerin'—and then—and then——"

"Well, what then, David?"

"Father, I got the hook."

"How was it done, David?"

"Father, there was a great big fellow behind the scenes who had a long stick with a crook at the end. He caught me around the waist with that crook and yanked me in."

"But, David, what possessed you to take part in amateur night?"

"I don't know, Father. Pat Noonan dared me. And besides I wanted to appear on a stage. Besides there was a prize of two dollars offered for the best amateur act, and I thought I might win it."

"But, David, don't you know that it isn't very nice or respectable to go on the stage with those so-called amateurs? Don't you know that those affairs are very cheap and far from respectable? Don't you know that you are very likely to be thrown into very common company?"

"Father, I didn't know anything about it. But I'll not do it again."

"I should not like any boy working in my office to be seen in such affairs. Respectable boys and girls keep out of such things."

"Father," said David, "Alice Morrow was in it."

"What!" I cried, jumping to my feet.

"She was. She danced the Highland Fling, and got the glad hand from the crowd, and she won the first prize of two dollars."

For a moment I felt sick. Had David thrown a book at me he could not have astonished me more. Alice Morrow, the daily communicant, Alice Morrow, the child in whom I had discerned, as I thought, such candor, such innocence, such refinement, Alice Morrow presenting herself on a cheap stage, with the cheapest actors! It was incredible.

"David," I said, "are you sure you know what you are talking about?"

"Yes, sir; she was there all right."

Then a great anger surged through me.

"David, get Alice Morrow to come here at once." Saying which I entered my office, closed the door, and fell to brooding.

Had it been my own sister, I could not have been more chagrined. The child had raised such high hopes in me, and now they were all dashed to the ground. Appearing to confide in me, she had deceived me. Honest indignation and that pitiful thing we call self-love united to fill my heart with what was little less than black rage.

Alice presently entered. She came in with her usual sunny smile, but on seeing my face—would that I had seen it myself—became very grave: she was clearly frightened.

"I can see by your looks, young lady," I said bitterly, "that you realize yourself without being told what a common thing, what a contemptible thing you have done."

"Yes, Father, I do," assented Alice, a look of pitiful deprecation coming upon her face.

"There's no need, then," I continued, "for me to enlarge on that feature of it. Such an action on the part of any girl in this school—especially any girl of the upper grades—would annoy me, to put it mildly, very much; but coming from a girl in whom I have taken such a keen interest, and from a girl to whom some of my friends have been so kind, it is shocking and scandalous."

I paused. But Alice said nothing. The child was struggling to keep back the tears, and so could not speak. Her silence I, of course, interpreted wrongly, as is the way with all of us when we allow our tempers to get away from us. I was looking at her, and thought she looked sullen. My anger grew stronger.

"I trusted you, Alice Morrow, and I thought I could depend on you. And you have deceived me *again*."

The child was now weeping, but I was too far gone to notice.

"Alice Morrow, I didn't expect anything like that from you; and I don't see how I can ever trust you again. Now you may go, and may you try hard to mend your ways."

The girl gave me an appealing glance; it was wasted on me. A man in a rage is a fool, and I was no exception.

"You can go," I said, and Alice left me to darkness of heart. It was to be for me a busy morning—I was to leave in the afternoon for a three days' stay in a neighboring city—and so, pulling myself together, I got to work, and,

not without difficulty, banished from my thoughts the wretched episode. Yet, throughout all the business of letter-writing and receiving callers, there was deep down in my heart a feeling of utter misery, a sense of guilt, of wrong, of injustice.

A few minutes after eleven o'clock I happened to raise my eyes and noticed on the top of my folding-desk a bouquet of beautiful roses. I had seen them when I first entered, but had been too disturbed to give them any attention. Now, for the first time, I observed a card attached to the vase. I arose and with languid interest gave it an examination.

It was a dainty card, and the writing upon it was done with exceeding care. Then as I read it my heart grew heavy as lead:

To Father Carney
With sincere love
From Alice Morrow.

The child, poor, ill-fed, to whom ten cents was a fortune, had spent her first earned money to show me her gratitude; and with those flowers scattering their fragrance over my head I had, in ill-judged zeal, scolded her unmercifully.

"David," I called out, "go at once to the eighth grade and tell the Sister I would like to see Alice Morrow at noon-time."

David returned presently.

"Father, the Sister says Alice was took sick an hour ago, and she sent her home."

I closed the door, and settled down to make an examination of conscience. Being thor-

oughly humbled and ashamed, I was able to see myself in the clear white light of truth. It was plain to me at once that I had been right as to my stand, wrong as to my mode of taking it. Alice should have been called to order. The "Amateur Night" was not for her. How easily would it have been for both of us had I gently pointed out to her the dangers, the *commonness* of such affairs. After all, she was but a child and, at that, a very inexperienced child. The frequentation of the Sacraments had guarded her innocence; had she been more sophisticated she would have known that "amateur nights" had their secret dangers. A few words of kindness, and she would have thanked me, and gone away all the better for our interview. But, instead of this, I had given a loose to my anger. My memory from this point went back to other years and other scoldings I had given. I could recall ten of these outbursts; but I could not recall a single case in which I had effected the least good, while in several I had done distinct harm. Going back further still, I brought to memory the scoldings given me in earlier life. They were all as it happened at school: my mother, the one whose influence over me had never weakened, did *not* scold. Two different teachers had spoken to me as I had to Alice. The scolding of one had given me hours of misery, the other's had almost brought me to abandon the vocation I had cherished from early youth. How difficult, I reflected, it is to carry out the injunction of Christ in admonishing our brother! It is easy to call to order; it is very difficult

to do it right. And here, at the age of forty-eight, I looked at myself to see how unlike Christ, the lover of souls, I still was.

"Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner," I groaned: and these words as I then uttered them were as good an act of contrition as ever I made, for they came from a heart thoroughly humbled and contrite.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GROWING TROUBLES OF THE MORROW FAMILY

VACATION passed quickly, and school reopened in September with an unusually fine set of girls in the business class, none more promising than Alice Morrow. She and her sister Elsie had, owing to the kindness of the Daltons, spent the vacation among the "hills of old Kentucky." They were very much the better, both of them, for their two months of sunshine, good food, and pure air.

Alice, whom I had not seen since the unhappy day I scolded her, paid me a visit. She was timid, cordial, but, it appeared, reserved. Between her and myself I had built a wall of separation, a wall of which blind anger had been the architect. What I could do to tear it down, I did. I tried to explain to Alice how I had been over-harsh, and the girl begged me not to speak of it. She could not, she said with much earnestness, hold a grudge against one who had been so good to her. I believed her; she meant what she said; but the wall remained. I had lost, it became clear to me, the influence over her I once possessed. For a time Alice Morrow was easily first in the business class. In the use of the typewriter she was already far advanced, and, as the Sister who had charge of that department told me, she could, if she wished, become a "speed specialist." After Christmas,

there was a decided falling off in all her work. She grew listless, and took little interest in class matters. Of course, she was still among the leaders: that she could be without effort. More than once I called Alice to account—gently, indeed; for I had learned my lesson in the school of blundering; and Alice had listened to me respectfully, but unmoved. She tried to explain herself; but the wall of reserve so quickly built was not so easily broken.

It was from Miss Margaret Dalton I learned that Alice had set her heart upon being an actress. She was on the look-out, Miss Dalton informed me, for opportunities to appear in charitable and other amateur entertainments; and scarcely a week passed that she was not out at night two or three times.

Again I called Alice to account. She admitted that it was her ambition to become a dancer; nor could my argument against such a step make any impression on her. I urged objections clear enough to myself, but the girl seemed to miss my meaning. She could not see the dangers: perhaps, I thought, she would not. It was borne upon me that I had said too much on the occasion of her first appearance, the result being that Alice, unconsciously, discounted anything I had to say on that one subject. It remained for me, then, thus doing penance for unguarded words, to commend the whole matter to God.

Almost simultaneously with Alice's frequent appearance upon the amateur stage, the old troubles began to revisit the Morrows. The little children told the story of an impoverished home in their dress, in their shoes, and in their

faces. Alice, somehow or other, contrived to dress nicely, but upon her face there came slowly but surely the pallor of poor food and the haggardness of late hours.

In February the Daltons and all their charitable friends were once more called upon. Mr. Morrow had stopped work and had indulged in a drunken bout lasting nearly two weeks. The usual result followed: he was forced to take to his bed.

At the instance of Elsie, I paid the wretched man a visit. He was very sick and very remorseful. There was no need for me to reprove him; he brought up the subject of his evil ways himself, and there were tears in his voice.

"Father," he said, "I'll do anything you say to conquer myself. I realize what a shameful life I have been leading, and I'd rather lose an eye or a hand than go on as I have. But when the impulse comes, I grow as weak as water. Sometimes I feel like killing myself. They'd be better off, if I were gone. Father, I swear to you that I want to reform."

"I believe you, Mr. Morrow, and I'm going to study out what can be done. On my road home I am going to see Dr. Kelly, and I'll get him to give you a thorough examination, after which we'll decide upon what is best to be done."

Dr. Kelly made his visit promptly and with equal promptness reported to me.

"The 'psychological moment,' " he observed, "is a very much overworked term nowadays; but, much as I dislike using it, I must say that is

the precise moment you sent me to visit our bibulous friend Morrow."

"Have you found out anything?"

"I certainly have, and, if you will pardon the repetition, I have found it out at the psychological moment: the man Morrow is in the first stages of tuberculosis." And saying this, the doctor smiled serenely.

"Of course, doctor, if you consider the first stage of tuberculosis a merry jest, I have nothing to say——"

"Stow that sarcasm, Father. In this case, while not exactly a subject for howling hilarity, it is a matter rather pleasant to contemplate than otherwise. There is a hospital for just such cases one hundred miles from here. Mr. Morrow must go there, and I have little doubt but that in the course of a year or so he will be completely cured. He says he'll do anything you say; and you will say it, if you please, my way. When he goes there he will be kept clear not only of drink but of practically all temptation to drink; and there's a young doctor there, a special friend of mine, who will take him in hand and see that everything that can be done will be done. It is possible that Morrow will be well as regards his lungs—in six or seven months; but he'll stay there till you say the word. The liquor habit needs a longer treatment in his case, I suspect, than the lung trouble."

For the next three or four days the Daltons, the Doctor, the Morrows, and myself were busily engaged in consultation as to ways and means to keep the family on their feet, without

the supposed help of the bread-winner, to such effect that what at first looked impossible gradually came to seem entirely feasible. To begin with, Mrs. Morrow would go out to sew in families each day, the getting of the families being a detail which Margaret Dalton would see to personally. The baby would be brought each morning by Elsie to a day-nursery, and called for by her after school-hours. As Mrs. Morrow would be obliged to leave home early and return late in the afternoon, Alice was appointed housekeeper. I readily excused her from class till nine o'clock each morning, and, as all the Morrows took their lunch at the school itself, she would be able to attend to these home duties and at the same time keep up with her class. And so it came to pass that Mr. Morrow disappeared from the scene of his many years of inactivity, and the rest of the family entered upon a new order.

Mrs. Morrow was a skilled seamstress and earned twelve dollars a week. It was not a very large sum; but twelve dollars a week received regularly is better than twenty a week coming intermittently. Miss Dalton, moreover, saw to it that the children were provided with shoes and clothes; Elsie, taking after her mother, became the home seamstress, and Alice developed wonderfully in the culinary way. In a word, no longer encumbered by the help of Mr. Morrow, the family were free from want, well-nourished, well-dressed, and, it must be frankly stated, loving Mr. Morrow as they all did, they were, nevertheless, happier far for his absence. There were no anxious vigils on Saturday night;

no slumbers broken by the fantastic antics of a drunkard. Morrow, himself, as his letters showed, was living a healthy, outdoor life—an abstemious life, too—was gaining weight and strength; and so, there being nothing to worry about, Mrs. Morrow grew tranquil of face, happy of manner, and recovered some of the youth she had been cut off from prematurely by her husband's dissipations.

Gradually, the wall of reserve between myself and Alice grew thinner. My influence upon her in the matter of choosing her calling, however, seemed to be *nil*. In vain, did I reason with her: my arguments lacked force. Somehow—was it a punishment for my burst of temper—I could not talk to her on the stage-question with any satisfaction to myself. Strong as my arguments were in themselves, I realized over and over again that in my presentation to her they were pitifully weak. I remember at that time loaning her "The O'Shaughnessy Girls," by Rosa Mulholland, a book which should be put in the hands of every stage-struck girl. She read it, liked it, but saw no reason for changing her purpose.

In the meantime Alice was attracting a great deal of attention in amateur circles, as a result of which an elocution academy of no particular standing gave her, in consideration of her "great Terpsichorean gifts," a scholarship. Her attendance every Saturday at the academy brought her into contact with a number of giddy girls and effeminate boys whose acquaintance, I considered, she would be better without. Also,

she was called upon to appear in dancing numbers more frequently than ever.

Alice never once invited me to any of the entertainments in which she appeared. Nay, more: I could see she did not want me to come. This fact in connection with some remarks made by several of my friends upon her work as a dancer, tempted me to suspect that, taking the temper of the time and the stage, Alice was dancing in a manner something wanting in the sweet modesty of her earlier days; and the suspicion was confirmed by various little changes in her dress, carriage, and the way of wearing her hair. The girl was, so it appeared to me, in her "silly season"; and I, who would do anything to save her, looked on helplessly, and prayed to God that the soul I believed to be so beautiful might not be drawn away by the "witchery of trifles."

I was signing the quarterly reports one morning, and paused with sorrow over Alice's. In the first quarter, the letter *E*, standing for excellent, was credited to all her studies. In the second *G*—good—took the place of all but one *E*. And now for the third quarter, the *G*'s were gone, and the letter *M*—medium—told the tale of steady decline.

"I must have another talk with that girl," I soliloquized. "She has gone from good to bad, and now she is going from bad to worse. Late nights, frivolous companions, frivolous ideals—good God! where is it to end? The 'Fairy of the Snows' whom I once held, as I thought, in the hollow of my hand, is now go-

ing her own way—a way anything but straight and narrow.”

My reflections were remorseful. I blamed myself for much of Alice's deterioration; thinking of which, I fell to imagining such dark episodes in Alice's future that I was obliged to check them as rash judgments. Many a prayer had I said for Alice: as I signed her report, I paused to breathe another. The ink was not dry on the paper when David brought me in the eleven o'clock mail.

The address of one letter was in a familiar hand. I opened it, and read:

“DEAR FATHER CARNEY: The night before last I was taken very sick, and Miss Dalton, on the advice of Dr. Kelly, had me removed to the Good Samaritan Hospital this morning. Is it asking too much of you to come over and see me to-morrow (Wednesday)? I am ashamed to ask you; but I do so want to see you; for I am to be operated on Thursday morning, and the operation is serious. Come, Father, if you can.

“Your unworthy and ungrateful child,

“ALICE MORROW.”

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH FATHER CARNEY SEES A NEW LIGHT,
AND ENTRUSTS ALICE WITH A GREAT
SECRET

IT WAS Sister Celestine herself, the head of the hospital, who conducted me to the clean, spotless room where lay Alice, very pale and with lines telling of recent suffering on her face.

The operation, Sister Celestine explained to me on the way, was a serious one; but the child's physical condition was so good that there was every hope of her coming out of it successfully.

On seeing me Alice's face showed unmistakable signs of joy. It was a return of the old cordiality. How often does sudden sickness bridge over years of restraint and separation, years of misunderstanding, and restore the older, the simpler, the better feelings! In illness many hearts are revealed.

"Oh, Father!"—and her hands came together and then were flung out toward me—"this is so kind of you!"

"How are you feeling, Alice?" I asked, catching her two hands in mine.

"I feel *well*, now that you are here. I have so wanted to talk to you, Father."

"If you'll excuse me, Father Carney, I will leave you with your little friend," said the Superioress. "I know she wants to open her heart to you."

"Father," said Alice, as Sister Celestine with-

drew, "I've been thinking hard for the past two weeks. There was an awful fight going on in me. All along, deep down in my heart, I felt that I was ungrateful to you. You hurt me so the day I sent you those flowers."

"And I hurt myself, too, Alice. It was only some hours after I spoke to you so cruelly that I saw your flowers upon my desk."

"You never told me that, Father."

"No, I suppose not: as usual, in that whole affair I bungled everything. But when I saw them, my dear, I understood at once that you had spent all you had won in an endeavor to show your gratitude to me. I sent up for you at once, only to learn that you had gone home."

"But, Father, I *deserved* that scolding."

"Perhaps you did deserve a scolding, Alice: in fact, I feel sure you did. But I should have spoken to you as I would imagine Our Lord would have spoken; whereas I allowed myself to use cruel and unkind words. My method was wrong."

"But I deserved a good punishment. When I undertook to appear on 'Amateur Night' I really didn't think it was very wrong or common. I didn't know any better. Still I felt it was a—a disloyalty to you; I felt you wouldn't approve of it. There was a lot of vanity in me, and I was just crazy to appear and win the admiration of a crowd. So I went on, forgetting that your approbation was more to me than the good opinion of a lot of people I didn't know at all. When I came to the dressing-room with my mother—she didn't know what the 'Amateur Nights' were herself—

my heart sank, and I felt like running away. There were three or four girls there whose language was common; and they were as vulgar as could be. Father, I never have gone and never will go to such a place again."

"I should have understood most of this, Alice. Knowing you as I did, I should have taken it for granted that you would never have taken part in an 'Amateur Night' had you realized the repute such affairs have among good people."

"Oh," said Alice, smiling as though sickness had left her, "you thought I should have had more sense. Father, I deserved a good whipping: *that* would have done me more good than any scolding. You should have beaten me."

"Good gracious, child: I never laid hands on a girl in my life: now, if it had been a boy——"

"Anyhow, Father, a beating would have done me more good; and I would rather get a hundred whippings than an unkind word."

"Well, Alice, I can promise you this: I'll never speak unkindly to you again. I have done it twice, and I have been punished."

"Father, if I should die——"

"You'll not die."

"If I should die, I want you to think of me not as the silly girl I've been the past year, silly in my thoughts and ways, but as I was the day I made my First Communion? Do you remember Grace and me awaiting at your office?"

There was a little sob in the child's voice: she was thinking of the blessed days, the days

of childhood, simplicity, and innocence, the "days that are no more."

"I do remember perfectly, my dear. And I was very much touched that you and Grace, who were so near and so dear to Our Lord, should think so much of me."

"Father, if I die, can you forget the girl I've been lately?"

"Alice—you won't die—but dead or alive I shall always remember you as the 'Fairy of the Snows'."

"I was talking a moment ago about deserving a whipping, Father; that thought came to me a few weeks ago. I was reading 'Freddy Carr.' There's a description there of the head of the College giving Freddy an awful trouncing. Do you know, Father, I'm not much of a critic, but to me that seemed to be a great passage. You don't find things like that, as a rule, except in Dickens and Thackeray."

"Alice," I exclaimed, "I believe you are a critic. You have picked out what in my estimation also is a great passage."

"Well, I read it and re-read it. And the more I read it the more it seemed to have a message for me."

"A message for you?"

"Yes, Father; I was thinking that I deserved a terrible whipping. And then I began to feel that God wanted to chastise me in His love, that He *would* chastise me and that I needed His 'chastening rod.' I began to wait for it: I felt that it was near. My past year began to take on an entirely different look. A week ago

I began to feel little pains, and I became afraid. Then on last Monday night God chastised me. It was a night of awful pain, and, through it all, I never could get away from the feeling that God, *just because He was a loving Father*, was whipping me. And it made me brave to bear it. The pain was terrible, but I knew that God was showing me His love. I thought for a while that I was dying. My mother and Francis and Elsie were around my bed rubbing my hands and feet, and doing all sorts of things. They thought I was unconscious, but I was not. I was never so conscious in all my life. For, Father, with the thought of death and of God's presence, I saw my past few months in all their ugliness. I saw how wrong I had been in thinking so little of your advice; I saw how I had neglected my studies, how I had acted through motives of vanity, how I had almost given up prayer and become worldly and selfish. Father, I was sorry from my heart, and I made a good act of contrition to God, who seemed to be nearer to me than I was to myself; and I told Him that if I lived I should change my life and obey you. The pain grew greater than ever after my act of contrition; but I did not mind it much, for I felt the love of God wrapping me round. It was that love of His which had saved me during those months from doing anything *very* bad. I saw how near I had been to great sin, and how God had taken me by the hand and, because I was blind, guided me, without my knowing it, away from dangerous places."

"Wonderful!" I exclaimed, taken no less by

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the girl's marvelous manifestation than by her power of expression. "God knows how to punish and how to chide."

"And now, Father, I am going to try to be what I was the day of my First Holy Communion; and to begin with I should like to make a general confession."

And so, with a humble and contrite heart, the little penitent made her confession, simply, sincerely, without the least trace of self-consciousness. There was a pretty pathos in her attitude toward herself. She regarded herself as a great sinner, although, as the conversation just recorded shows, she was still, despite a few months of foolishness and a few excursions as far as the danger line, the pure, winsome "Fairy of the Snows."

"And now, Father," she said, after confession, "I feel so happy that I don't mind the pain. And, if God wants me, I'm perfectly willing to go. But, Father, will you trust me again as you used to?"

"Certainly, Alice."

"And forget my ingratitude?"

"Don't speak to me of ingratitude. You are just the same to me now, Alice, as you always were."

"Thank you so much, Father. And if I get well, I'm going to do just what you tell me."

Then I blessed her, and left her, pain-racked of body, but with the light of happiness shining in her eyes.

On the morrow I said Mass for Alice. There were many dear friends, friends who held a warm place in my heart, but on this morning

the memory of them was faint. The patient little girl, whom I had so misjudged, lying on her bed of pain, resigned, happy, ready to go cheerfully under the knife, ready to receive right willingly life or death as God should choose—she, and she alone, stood out clear in the presence of Christ upon the altar and of all the surrounding angels adoring at the Holy Sacrifice, as the one for whom I was to direct all the mighty impetratory forces of the unbloody offering.

Toward noon-time I managed to call up the hospital. It was Sister Celestine who answered my inquiries.

“Father, the operation on your little Fairy of the Snows was most successful from the surgeons’ standpoint.”

“Hang their standpoint,” I bawled out, with extreme fervor.

I could hear the Sister’s laugh: it was reassuring.

“I understand, Father; you want to know how it was from the child’s standpoint. Well, her heart is very strong, and all her organs are perfectly sound. Do you know that she thinks a lot of you?”

“That,” I answered, “is one of the natural mysteries which I have been forced to believe, but do not understand. What I have done for Alice, I have done for many a boy and girl, and would do again for any child under the same conditions.”

“Well, she is grateful. While she was under the anæsthetic she talked about you quite freely and in language astonishing for a girl of her

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years. All her remarks came to this, that the sun rises and sets with you."

"But how is she getting on?"

"Splendidly. Everything is in her favor."

"Thank you very much, Sister. In two or three days I shall try to pay her a visit."

It was not, however, till Monday of the following week that I was able to carry out my intention. Alice, lying in bed and condemned so to lie for a few days longer, was chatting gaily with Teresa Dalton; and, no doubt, Master David's ears were burning, for he was the subject of her conversation. Teresa had come with flowers—the room was rich with them—and other gifts to entertain; but it seemed to be, as the saying is, the other way round. It was Alice who was providing the entertainment.

The child was delighted to see me; everybody, she said, was so kind to her; mama came every day, and the children nearly as often; papa had written her a beautiful letter; Miss Margaret and Miss Quinlan had come each morning; the girls of her class had visited her in twos by turns, and they had clubbed together and sent her such lovely flowers. David, her enemy, had sent her a *mince-pie*—"If you don't believe it, Father, look at it over there on the table"—the nurse had been so kind, the Sister in charge of her room kinder, and Sister Celestine kindest of all; and the surgeon was as good even as Dr. Kelly, who came every day and poked fun at her.

"And, Father," concluded Alice, "you've just got to go and be real sick in order to learn how

much goodness and kindness there is in this world."

"If that's the case," said Teresa, "I'd just as soon not know. I am willing to take such goodness and kindness for granted."

Whereupon Alice laughed in all the freedom of her former years. She was a little child again. A quarter of an hour passed quickly, and as Teresa and I walked down the stairs together she remarked:

"Alice is more of a fairy than ever."

"Think," I said, "of a fairy undergoing an operation."

"That's precisely where the fairy comes in," retorted Teresa. "No human being could improve so fast. The surgeon says she'll be sitting up in a day or two, and on her feet in a week."

And so it came to pass, as I learned from Alice's classmates, some of whom visited her daily. A fortnight had not gone by, when a thought thinner and paler, she entered my office. It was good to see her again—to see her the same frank, open-hearted child she had been at the time of her First Holy Communion.

"Now, Father," she went on, after a mutual change of civilities, "I want your advice: tell me what I am to do."

"I'm ready to give you advice, Alice, for I have been thinking and thinking until I have reached a very practical conclusion."

"Anything you say, Father."

"To begin with, Alice, your mother has been acting as bread-winner since your father went away. and she has had very long hours."

"They are too long, Father."

"All the year round, yes. The want of fresh air necessitated by indoor work is likely to tell on her; and besides, good as you and Elsie are, your mother can't wholly get away from the burden and responsibility of a large family."

"It must be hard," assented Alice. "Oh, Father, do you think I should start to work?"

"One thing at a time, my dear. I see no difficulty in your mother's going on as she has for a while longer; but think of next year—of September to next June! Probably it will take that time to put your father on his feet again. It seems clear to me that your mother should not attempt to work every day."

"We miss her so at home. It's bad enough to be without papa, but when mama is away I feel like an orphan. So does Elsie."

"Well, now, I have a plan which isn't entirely a sure one; but still I have enough faith in you, Alice, to try it."

"Thank you, Father: I'll do anything to justify your counting on me."

"First of all, Alice, you must, for the present at least, drop the academy of elocution."

"I stopped that, Father, two days after I read 'Freddy Carr.'"

"Secondly, you must, again for the present, drop your engagements in amateur theatricals."

"Willingly, Father."

"In the third place, you need only come to class during April, May, and June—the three months left—for shorthand. The rest of the time in class-hours I want you to give to shorthand and typewriting alone. Sister Rosalie will

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give you an occasional few minutes, and you are to go on with your work without regard to the rest of the class."

"Oh, Father!" cried Alice joyously, "I think I begin to see."

"You only think so, Alice. But the plan is a dead secret. Sister Rosalie knows it, and is delighted. I know it; and now I'm going to tell you. But you must be sure to keep it all to yourself."

"I will, Father. What is it?"

The great secret roused Alice's enthusiasm to the highest pitch. She clapped her hands, she thanked me, she danced from the room.

CHAPTER XX

INTRODUCING MR. LAWSON WITH VERY PROMISING RESULTS FOR THE MORROWS

FOR Alice Morrow, April, May, and June were strenuous months. I saw little of her—she was too busy—but hardly a week passed without my receiving reports from various quarters bearing upon her movements.

Sister Rosalie, the kind, sympathetic teacher of shorthand, was almost as enthusiastic as Alice herself.

"The child," she remarked on one occasion, "has a marvelous memory. She can finish all I have to teach her in stenography by the first of May; and then it will be only a question of getting speed. She is the best speller in the class, and, partly owing to the reading she has done, partly to her natural gift of imagination, she is, beyond all doubt, the finest English scholar that has come into my hands since we began our two-year business course. As for the typewriter, you can blindfold her, and she'll do much better work than the best of the others with their eyes open. I really think, Father, that your little plan will work out."

Sister Marie, teacher of the other branches in the business class, also brought in a fine report.

"I don't know what you are up to, Father," she said.

"It's a dead secret," I interpolated.

"But I hope you are not going to give Alice her Certificate or Diploma, as having made successfully our business course after *one* year; it would be a bad precedent. All the girls would want to finish in a year, and our plan of studies would be ruined."

"Sister, remain calm: I have no intention of giving Alice her diploma."

"Not that she isn't fit as regards the subject-matter, for she is; but because she has not gone through the fixed periods we require."

"Sister Marie, I'll stand by all the precedents."

"I never saw a girl so changed; she goes to Communion every morning, and, while she is the merriest, brightest girl in the class, she is also the most devout. Sickness, we are often told, seldom improves any one. All the same, since Alice left the hospital she has been a different person."

Miss Margaret Dalton, the indefatigable, also had her comments to make.

"I go to the Morrows every week," she told me one morning, "and the cleanness, the good taste, the refinement in that poor tenement is simply astonishing. Little Elsie keeps the little ones dressed like children of the blood royal. She herself is a little saint: she says that God wants her to take Margaret's place. Mrs. Morrow herself, though rather tired at times, is a new woman. With the children, she is a child again; and her laugh is as sweet and as simple as theirs. Francis is a brave little man, and assists Elsie, Alice, and the mother in every way. The baby is plump and never cries unless

you stick a pin in him. But the bright, particular light of the household is Alice. In the one detail of cooking, she can make something out of nothing. The meals are good, and thanks to the art-instinct of Alice, dainty, too. And still the expenses for food are lighter than in many a family where the meals are far inferior. After supper, all turn in, save the baby, and clean up: it is done with dispatch; and then Alice gets the children around her and keeps them occupied with games or listening to stories until half past seven or so, and then comes bedtime for Francis. Then, seated at the table with the lamp between them, Alice and Elsie go to work at their studies. At nine Elsie goes off to her devotions, which are long, while Alice continues studying sometimes till eleven o'clock. Father Carney, wealth—millions of money—could not buy the happiness of that poor family."

"Thanks to you and to your sister, Miss Dalton."

"To *you*, Father. We'd never have taken up the case if it had not been for you."

"Yes, but if you had followed my foolish advice you'd have given them up long ago. Don't you remember when I advised you to turn them over to the Humane Society? I lost patience; but you did not."

"But look how you have influenced Alice; somehow, the family turns about her. She had, toward the end, a wonderful influence over her father. Many a night, as I have since learned, she gave up her studies just to keep him interested and entertained. She knew, by intuition,

it may be, when his craze for drink was on him, and then she dropped everything to care for him."

"Another light!" I exclaimed. "This will account, in part at least, for Alice's apparent neglect of studies, after the first quarter of the present school-year."

"And sometimes," continued Miss Dalton, "she has gone out at nights at the very beginning of one of his drinking bouts and succeeded in getting him home. Her mother was never able to do that."

"In a word, Miss Dalton, Alice is and has been a heroine."

"The fairy of her home, Father."

Here I proceeded to tell Miss Dalton of our little plan—the secret known only to three, now revealed to a fourth. Miss Dalton was more enthusiastic than any of us.

"What a fine idea!" she said. "Father, if my sister and I can help in any way, let us know—money or anything in our power."

"Thank you, Miss Dalton. What the girl will need by the first of May is plenty of practice at taking dictation."

"Father, what do you think of this plan? My sister Mary has charge of all our business matters, and just now there is a great deal to be attended to. The correspondence is heavy, and probably will be so for six weeks. We could hire a typewriting machine and Alice could give us a couple of hours a day. I am sure my sister would be delighted to work with us; and, besides, Alice could earn a little money."

I reflected for a moment.

"How would from half past nine to twelve each morning suit you?"

"It would be just the right time. Mary gives all the morning hours to business letters, and just now is not able to get through her work. I am sure she will be delighted."

Miss Dalton was right: her sister, duly acquainted with the secret, said that Margaret's plan was the solution of a difficulty which had been growing each day. Alice was at once pressed into service. The Daltons lived full two miles from St. Xavier School; at the suggestion of Dr. Kelly Alice walked thither and back each day, thereby doing away with the one weak point in our plan, to wit, the danger to the child's health from too much work and too little fresh air and exercise.

The secret circle grew wider, still retaining its secret. Alice had once referred to the stenographer of my Sodality who had offered to help her in the learning of the typewriter. The young lady in question was Miss Florence Desmond. Connected for years with one of the great law firms of Cincinnati, Florence was not only an expert at shorthand and stenography, but was also familiar with a variety of mercantile forms and with those devices for method and order made use of in modern business offices. It was Alice herself who suggested making Miss Desmond acquainted with the great secret.

"You see, Father, she's been so good to me. It is to her I owe my success in typewriting. She has been very kind; and, besides, if she knows it's your plan she will do anything to help.

She knows so much, and she has a gift for communicating knowledge."

"A capital suggestion, Alice. She is often free from three to four in the afternoon, and I know she will be only too glad to give you hints outside of Sister Rosalie's matter which will be of great help to you."

"And, Father," continued Alice, taking out a little book, "please look at this."

It was a savings-account book of the Pearl Street Market Bank made out in the name of Alice Morrow. I opened it. There was the record of two deposits of five dollars each on May 7th and on May 14th.

"Good gracious!" I said. "What's this?"

"Some of my earnings, Father. I'm getting six dollars a week and mama twelve. We got along very nicely on twelve, but now we're living at thirteen a week. Of course, we've been helped a good deal; and we're all well provided with shoes and clothes. Every week now, with mama's approval, I'm to put away five dollars."

"Capital!" I exclaimed. "Now run away, child, and tell our secret to Miss Desmond."

There are many generous, whole-souled, devoted people in this world, and it has been my happy fortune to meet a goodly number of them. Of these Miss Desmond was by no means the least. She took Alice in hand for an hour almost every day with gratifying results.

The secret spread further. Miss Desmond knew other young women—most of them belonging to the Young Ladies' Sodality—who were specialists in various lines of business.

With the permission of our secret society she got them interested, too.

The whole work of coaching Alice, beginning with Sister Rosalie down to Miss Desmond and three capable young women, was distinguished by enthusiasm, unselfishness, and love. The little girl won the hearts of all.

On June 19th Alice did not come to class. She was not ill, I informed the regular teacher; she would appear the next day. The cause of her disappearance, I added, was a dead secret.

"How long," asked Sister Marie, who, though saintly, was, thank God, human, "how long is this mystery to remain unexplained?"

"In a few days," I made answer, "all will be made manifest."

And so it came about. The morning newspapers four days later announced that at the Civil Service examination held on June 19th for several stenographic positions at nine hundred dollars a year, Miss Alice Morrow had been first with a percentage of ninety-seven.

The business class was given a holiday.

It turned out that Miss Morrow, being only fifteen years of age, was ineligible; but that bit of information I had discounted. The glory for the school was all the greater; while Alice's chances for a good position were vastly improved by the publicity given her abilities.

One of the men who came into my office to congratulate me was Mr. John R. Lawson, the finest scientist, in his own particular branch, I have ever known, and the humblest man, outside of one or two followers of the religious life, I have ever met. Mr. Lawson and I had been,

though we met each other rarely, good friends for years. One of the things which had drawn me to him was his exceeding kindness and brotherliness to every man and woman in his employment. They loved to work for him; he loved to look out for their interests. It had struck me that his attitude toward those working under him was Christ-like.

"Father," he said, "I came to congratulate you on the honor won for your school by that young woman."

"Thank you, Mr. Lawson. Her success has made me and others very happy. But you have one detail wrong; she is *not* a young woman."

"Are there any *boys* going by the name of Alice?"

"No; but there are girls. Alice Morrow is a child of fifteen."

"Indeed! Why that is astonishing. Let me congratulate you again."

"Yes, but there's a fly in the ointment. Because of her age Alice cannot obtain the position."

"And she needs it?"

"Yes."

"How is she in English?"

"Good: far beyond the average. She is a great reader, and, for her age, speaks excellently. She knows her Dickens, and is now in love with Thackeray. Even in poetry, she is well read."

"Father, you interest me more than you imagine. How about her spelling and punctuation?"

"She is so good that I would not hesitate to

send her to any printer's office as a proof-reader."

"Excuse me, Father, I'm afraid I may seem bold; but could I see the girl for a few minutes?"

"Certainly; it will be a pleasure."

The "Fairy of the Snows" presently entered. She was still radiant with the joy of her recent success; the more so as she knew that her own triumph was a triumph for the school. How different from the tiny fairy of five years ago! Health and happiness marked her features; she was well grown, well developed for her years, and dressed, no longer like a fairy of the snows, but like a good, self-respecting tasty, modest girl.

Mr. Lawson, in his gentle and cordial way, quickly made Alice perfectly at home with him. He said very little, but his questions were so cleverly put that Alice within nine or ten minutes gave us both a very fair idea of her range of reading and her literary views. Mr. Lawson, possibly because he was both a literary and a scientific man, showed a skill in questioning which I could not but admire. It is a pleasure to study clever men in action. So tactfully did he proceed that Alice did not so much as suspect that she was being examined by a man who had specialized in drawing out other people's knowledge.

"Good-bye, Mr. Lawson, I am very pleased to have met you, and I hope we shall see each other again," said Alice in leaving the room with, of course, her great curtsy.

"Father, pardon me: I am taking up your time!"

"Don't mention it: I have not lost a moment of time since you came in."

"I'm ashamed to impose on you; but could you give me something of that girl's family history?"

"Gladly," I said.

"Father," said Mr. Lawson after I had told him the main facts set down in this narrative, "I think that God sent me in here this morning. I was going along west on Sixth, when, in passing from Broadway to Sycamore, I recalled that you were in your office, as you once told me, every morning. I felt an impulse to call on you for a moment—you know I've not been here for two years. Reason, however, ruled out impulse. Reason said, 'You have no business there and Father Carney must be busy.' I was about to abandon the idea when suddenly there flashed through my memory a news item concerning the success of a girl in your school in the Civil Service examination. I've always been interested in examinations; in fact, I've been on examining boards off and on these last twenty-five years."

"And you are considered an expert." I ventured to say.

"No better than the others, Father; only I am always so anxious to find out what young people know."

"I could see that a moment ago," said I.

"Some examiners who are much cleverer than I," continued Mr. Lawson simply, "seem to be trying to find out what people *don't* know."

That's not hard. We're all ignorant in so many ways. Why, Father, if you were to go at me in that direction you could keep me making professions of ignorance for the next twenty-four hours."

And this, I reflected, from the best informed man that had entered my office since his last visit, a man, moreover, who in his own line of research is second to none in the Western Hemisphere.

"But to return to our mutton. I came here to congratulate you and I find a little girl here, good as gold, refined, frank, and with, I believe, just the qualifications I am looking for."

"What's that?" I said.

"Father Carney, you know that I write stuff of a lighter nature now and then?"

"I have read several of your novels—and with great pleasure, Mr. Lawson."

"Thank you, Father. Well, I am getting old, and it's time for me to take in sail. My fingers are rather stiff, and I rarely use the pen in consequence. Things have come to a pass where I can do away with much of routine office work; and I intend writing another novel, if it please God to give me a few years more, and to put in order for publication a number of scientific papers. I have had plenty of stenographers—very good ones, all of them; but they were business stenographers. As I intend to dictate my entire novel—and possibly others later—I want some one who can spell and, above all, punctuate and paragraph properly."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed.

"That little girl, from what I have seen of

her and from what you have told me, would, in spite of her age, be just the sort I want; she has the literary sense."

"I am not a 'literary fellur' as you are, Mr. Lawson, but it has often struck me that Alice Morrow has in her the stuff of which writers are made."

"I think you are right, Father Carney, and if you are I shall be a very happy man. It will settle a vexed question. And I shall be very, very grateful to you."

"Not so grateful, Mr. Lawson, as I am to you."

"Is the girl free yet?"

"At once."

"Well, I can easily find out whether she will do. Could I try her in the outer office?"

"Certainly, and I hope she will get the position."

"You know, Father, I am not a Catholic. But no man outside your faith respects it more. How can any one visit Montreal and the old Canadian settlements without revering the Church which made these people what they are? Your little girl, I assure you, will be safeguarded in her religion."

"You needn't tell me that, Mr. Lawson. Some of my Sodalists have worked for you; and I am free to say that I know of no man in Cincinnati to whom I would so soon trust Alice Morrow."

"No one has ever paid me a nicer compliment. All I can say is that I'll try so to act as to deserve it."

Alice was again examined. She took his dic-

tation for fifteen minutes, and a half hour later returned with a bundle of papers.

Mr. Lawson went over several pages slowly, carefully; while Alice waited in a thrill of expectancy. His face, as he went from page to page, brightened. At the seventh page, he stopped.

"There's no need to go further," he said. "Father, I congratulate you again. She knows punctuation better than I do; her paragraphing, a little different from mine, is very good, and her spelling excellent. The girl can come to my office to-morrow; and if she's worth nine hundred a year to the city, she's worth that to me, too. What do you say to that, Alice? Nine hundred a year, and, if you keep improving, one hundred a month from the first of January?"

Alice looked at me and then at Mr. Lawson. She had grown very pale. Suddenly, just like the very little child of former years, she rushed to my side.

"Oh, Father!" she cried, and pillowed her head upon my arm.

Gently conducting her to a chair, for I feared she was on the point of fainting, I accompanied Mr. Lawson to the vestibule.

"That little cry of hers—'Oh, Father,'"—he said in low tones, "and that little gesture of complete confidence in you rounds off the examination. She has just unwittingly told me that in addition to her literary knowledge, her splendid memory, her quickness in taking dictation and putting it on paper, she has, in spite of her fifteen years, the sweetness, the innocence, the

delicate purity of a little child. Father, how do you Catholics triumph so over heredity and environment?"

"For the answer to that, Mr. Lawson, you must go to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. That girl almost without interruption since her First Communion has received Christ each morning."

"God keep her innocent and bright."

And so the great man departed, leaving me very happy and very thankful.

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH EVERYBODY IS HAPPY AND THE GOOD
SHIP "HARDLY-EVER," CAPTAIN RO-
MANCE, COMES SAILING IN

I WAS sitting in my room at five o'clock in the evening on a typical day of February. Darkness had come early; for it was still snowing and sleeting heavily. Dressed in street attire, I waited for an expected visitor, and, thus waiting, meditated.

Many things had happened since Alice Morrow had stepped into what I considered, with fervent thanks to God, an ideal position.

Little gypsy-faced, gypsy-haired Jenny Jenkins had lost, as the saying is, her mother early in the autumn. Strictly speaking, it was no loss at all. Mrs. Jenkins, one of a large class, had drunk to excess all her life, with the usual result—a very short span of years. There were no mourners—to speak of—at her funeral, save Jenny, her three brothers, and an older sister, who bade fair to preserve the tradition of her mother in the way of beer consumption in season and out. It is true there were also present in the church six or seven "old cronies" of the deceased, women with swollen and red-denied faces, rouge having no part in the coloring, and watery eyes, whose presence was made known wherever they went by a circumambient atmosphere of stale beer. Thanks to the thoughtfulness of the older sister they had celebrated the wake, as they would celebrate a

baptism or a marriage or a misfortune or anything untoward or unusual—in terms of beer. During the Mass, they nodded and slumbered, visions of the foaming glass, doubtless, making pleasant their unaccustomed devotions.

There were no mourners except the children: nevertheless, out of regard to Jenny, Mrs. Milton was there, and Mrs. Milton went to the graveyard. How she brought it about, no one knows; but somehow she secured the older girl's consent to bring Jenny Jenkins to her own home; and from that day to this Jenny has made good the promise of her First Communion. She is the leader of her class, clean, regular; and gives promise of growing up a credit to the good woman who gave the child her first home and the next best thing to a mother's love.

David has left the office. He was honest and straightforward to the end; but two years at the work showed beyond a doubt that he was a square peg in a round hole. It took me some time to discover that David was very fond of horses. It was easy to place him as the "boy" on a delivery wagon of the Adams' Express. He has been promoted several times, and some day, I doubt not, the artless youth will be stable superintendent. He still visits me, and continues to answer my most idiotic questions with painstaking exactness and unchanged gravity.

Elsie Morrow is now the prefect of the St. Agnes Sodality—a society for the school children but recently established. So great was her reputation for holiness that she was elected to the office by practically a unanimous vote of the

one hundred and thirty members. Lacking the vivacity of Alice, she is still like her in many ways.

The following letter from Grace Elwood, received at Christmas time, contained grateful news:

"DEAR FATHER CARNEY: A Merry Christmas to you as this leaves me feeling the same. Father, I've made my last appearance! Mama is now getting a small pension, and besides she is teaching, here in Chicago, calisthenics in three convent schools, and so we don't have to work any more. I am glad, and mama is gladder. We go to Communion each day and never forget you. How is my dearest friend, Alice Morrow? Give her my fond love. We are coming to see you both next spring; and in the meantime, I am going to do my best to be a good little girl.

"Your true friend,

"GRACE ELWOOD."

All these things—and many others of no special interest to the reader—was I meditating upon with a thankful heart, when the porter, duly knocking, informed me that there was a man in the parlor who wanted to see me "by appointment."

The man arose as I entered. He was a striking figure, above the middle height, clear of eye, ruddy of cheek, with slightly grizzled mustache; it was hard for me, though I had been expecting him, to recognize in the finely dressed man my old trouble, Mr. Morrow.

"So it's you, Mr. Morrow," I exclaimed, grasping his hand.

"Yes, Father, here I am nearly two years older, but I hope a changed man. I am better and stronger now than I have been any time these ten years, and with the help of God I am going, for the sake of my wife and little ones, to take proper care of myself."

"I never imagined," I said, "you could look so well."

"Oh, Father, what a fool, what a beast I have been! These two years have been years of self-examination. I've had my struggles, especially in the first year, but since I left home not one drop of liquor has passed my lips."

"Are you satisfied that you have conquered yourself?"

"I'm afraid to say 'yes,' Father; but before I leave this room, I'm going to take an oath never, so long as I live, to touch liquor."

"Mr. Morrow," I said, "I believe you have won your fight."

"So long as I don't touch it at all, I am safe; and therefore I'll not touch it. The craving is gone; I have not had the craving these twelve months and more."

"And do you feel fit for work?"

"As a plasterer? No, Father. The doctors say I should never have gone into that sort of work; and for the past two years I've been plugging hard at the studies which I neglected as a boy. My parents were good, Father; they were, though you may not believe it, refined."

"I do believe it."

"But I was the black sheep of the family.

At eighteen I ran away from home, and happening to get in with some very bad companions, I chose their work—plastering—to keep with them. It is a fact, Father, that I actually cultivated my taste for drink. My stay at the fresh-air home has given me a chance to come back to the studies and tastes of my boyhood. Some day, please God, once that I get on my feet, I'm going back to the old home. Since running away, I've been ashamed to let them hear from me."

"No matter how nice and refined your people are," I commented, "they will be proud of you when they see your good wife and your lovely children."

"Father, I've been bursting to ask you how they are."

"Don't you know?"

"For over a month I have heard nothing. Alice, I know, is doing some sort of work; but she has given me no details. She told me not to worry, that they were well provided for. I often wondered how."

"Dr. Kelly has had his way in the matter of news, Mr. Morrow. He thought it better, all things considered, that you should be kept in ignorance of many things till you were considered fit to come home again. It was he who directed Alice to cease all communications with you over a month ago. In a few minutes, however, you will know all. Come: we will go together."

"First, Father, let me make my solemn and binding promise to God."

I am no prophet, but I dare predict that Mr.

Morrow will be true to that promise unto death.

Together, through the driving snow, we walked down as far as Sixth and Sycamore. Mr. Morrow would have gone on, but I caught his arm, saying:

"We turn east here."

"Aren't we going home?"

"Yes: but no longer on Third near Broadway. Your family has changed its address."

"Where do they live?"

"On Pioneer Street in the house Alice set her heart on some years ago, when——"

"When I made a beast of myself. God forgive me. But, Father Carney, who is paying the rent?"

"All in good time," I answered.

We arrived very shortly at the little two-story house on Pioneer Street. There were lights in every window, and, as we put foot on the steps, the door was thrown open and there, framed in the doorway with the snow beating all about her, stood with outstretched hands the radiant Fairy of the Snows.

"Oh, papa!" she cried—joy was the note of that cry—and sprang into his arms. Then forth from every corner of the room rushed mother and Elsie and Francis; forth toddled the baby, and all of them, catching Mr. Morrow by arms and legs and clothes, bore him with shouting and hugging and kissing and laughter into the *home*.

Never since Pioneer Street won its name did it witness such a joyous homecoming. The wife and children clung to Mr. Morrow with an intensity of affection, all circumstances consid-

ered, which made me rub my eyes. To me the man had been a moral monster, a heart-breaking incubus. I had considered him only in one light: the children knew him better. He had been, strange as it may seem to those who have read this narrative, a fond, devoted father, despite the one weakness which had shut out from me all thought of any redeeming quality.

One by one, holding them at arms' length, Mr. Morrow in a veritable transport of joy gazed upon wife and Alice and Elsie and Francis and the baby. He looked and saw that they were bright and healthy and happy.

Presently, sinking back upon a sofa, he covered his eyes with his hands. Happiness had unmanned him.

"Now you know the papa I used to talk to you about," whispered radiant Alice. "He's himself now; good, big, and strong, with the kindest of hearts."

"And so, Alice, he will remain to the end. I feel sure that from now on he will always be himself."

"That's what Dr. Kelly says, Father, and the young doctor out there is willing to stake his professional reputation on my father's cure from tuberculosis and on his moral reform; and Dr. Kelly adds that while papa was to blame for excessive drinking in the beginning, for the last six years his trouble has been almost purely physical."

Mrs. Morrow, who had slipped from the room, now returned with the Daltons and Miss Quinlan; and with them the party was complete.

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"Where," said Mr. Morrow, after a cordial exchange of greetings, "did you get all this beautiful furniture?"

"A fairy brought it," I made haste to answer. "And this is not all. Come upstairs, Mr. Morrow."

We all went up in a body, and amidst chatter and laughter and badinage the head of the house saw his own room, the room of Alice, that of Elsie and that of Francis, clean, neat, and, though simple in appointments, in the very best taste. It was a true home: wealth could not do more.

"I should like to know that fairy!" ejaculated Mr. Morrow.

"There she stands," I said, pointing to Alice, "the Fairy of the Snows."

When Mr. Morrow for the first time heard how Alice had come to earn her appellation, he hung his head; when from Miss Dalton he got the story of Alice's success in the Civil Service examination, he hung it lower; when he was told that Alice, by what seemed the special providence of God, had at once found a position at nine hundred a year, and that, giving perfect satisfaction, she was now receiving one hundred a month, he covered his face with his hands; and when, finally, I told him that the serene and gentle Elsie, who had thrown herself at his feet on the floor at his side, gazing up at him with simple, unaffected love, was at the end of the eighth grade to go to the academy on East Sixth for a year or two and then enter the Notre Dame Convent, he raised his head once more, a great awe upon his fea-

tures, and said, in tones the impressiveness of which I shall never forget:

"Why has God been so good to me?" and fell to embracing his children again.

"Papa," interrupted Alice, "you are invited to my party."

"Party, my dearest?"

"Yes, papa; my birthday party; I'm sixteen to-day, and no girl ever felt happier on her birthday than I do right now. Come, papa." And she led the happy father down the stairway and into the dining-room.

Surprise had been so piled on surprise that one would think Mr. Morrow's power of emotion was exhausted, but the candles on the table, the lights above, the flowers and the sheen of glass, the color designs, the repast itself, forced the father to gasp again. Much as taste and money and exceeding care had done to make the dining-room a thing of beauty, the prettiest detail was furnished, all unconsciously, by the four librarians, Alice's four classmates and partners in mischief. Two of them, blushing and bowing and smiling, stood at the entrance to the kitchen, bonneted and aproned as cooks—two of them, likewise blushing and bowing and smiling, stood at either end of the table, neat-handed, beribboned and fitted out as typical waitresses. It was a party within a party. Assisted by Alice, they were to take care of us; and, their own turn come, were to banquet together, recall old days, not forgetting, you may be sure, Master David with his Japanese snuff.

The hours passed happily, and then, leaving the girls to carry on the festivity, Margaret

Dalton, her sisters, Miss Quinlan, and myself took our leave. Alice was busy, at the time, in entertaining her schoolmates and we did not like to break in upon their lively chatter and gay laughter.

As the door closed upon us we were all filled with a sense of thanksgiving.

"So much for heredity and environment," I said.

"You conquered both, Father," said Miss Quinlan.

"Not at all; I gave up," said I. "It was Margaret and her sisters."

"No, it wasn't," they protested. Margaret added: "We don't work, I hope, for earthly reward; and we all find charity-work rather hard and often ungrateful. But even from a natural point of view, the joy the Morrow family has given us makes up for any number of seeming failures."

"We plant and we sow," I commented, "but it is God who gives the increase."

Just then, a cheerful, silvery call caused us to turn round. The Morrow door was open, and out on the step stood Alice, holding in her hand the birthday cake, the sixteen candles burning brightly. Behind her in the shadow we could see the four librarians grouped together with arms around each other's shoulders. By an unstudied effect, the light of the candles burning clear—for the wind had died away—fell full upon the smiling, happy, beautiful face of sweet sixteen, and the snowflakes wrapped her about as in a veil.

"Good-bye, good-bye," she cried.

"Look!" cried Teresa Dalton, "Look! Did you ever see so pretty a picture—that background of girls and the face of Alice, 'the sweetest child that e'er drew breath,' standing out in all its loveliness, and the snow rioting about her. Her name is once more justified."

"Our Fairy of the Snows," said Miss Quinlan.

